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ABSTRACT

Intended to help writing teachers create a classroom climate where real writing can be inspired, valued, and enjoyed, the WEDGE (Writing Every Day Generates Excellence) manual addresses first the problem of motivating students to communicate in writing, next, finding words and structures appropriate for clarity and eloquence, and finally, the mechanical conventions that make writing technically correct. Following an introduction that discusses the philosophy, approach, and major strategies of the WEDGE program, the chapters discuss the following aspects of writing instruction: (1) getting started; (2) modes of writing; (3) meshing writing with literature; (4) revising, editing, and proofreading; (5) grammar, sentence sense, and mechanics; and (6) responding, diagnosing, and evaluating. Appendixes include student writing samples, student reactions to class activities, and a discussion of the advantages of holistic and analytic scoring. (HTH)

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Persuasive Essa

Writing Every Day Generates Excellence

A Manual for the Teaching of Writing

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good because
gives me a place to write
while things. I like to
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in my to a diary. like writing
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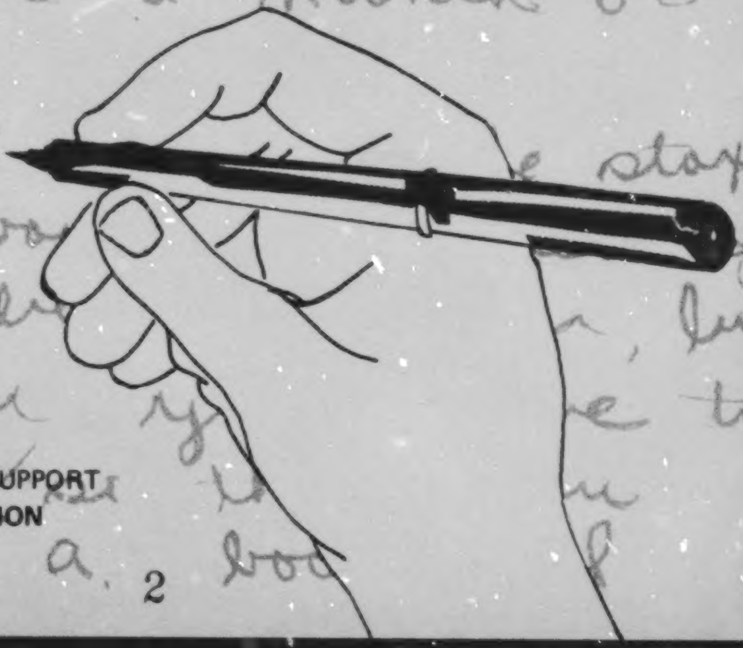

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Foreword

The WEDGE project was initiated four years ago in response to a demand by both the public and the educator for ways to improve the writing ability of our students.

Some educators and parents perceived the problem as a lack of knowledge of the mechanics – grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. However, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), conducting an education research project mandated by Congress, determined that students throughout the country are simply unable to express feelings and ideas – whether the writing calls for personal recollections or analysis and generalization. Based on these findings, WEDGE is concerned first with the root of the problem – motivating the students to communicate in writing. The program next aims to find the words and structures appropriate for clarity, and even eloquence. Finally, it teaches the mechanical conventions which make writing technically correct.

One of the useful purposes of the recent competency movement has been to refocus attention on writing. However, this new focus has too often been placed on teaching test-taking strategies. Certainly, writing should be included in every grade and in every subject, thus limiting the need for remedial writing classes whose sole objective is to "pass the test."

This revised *WEDGE Manual* is the product of the three-year ESEA IVC experimental program which was validated by the New York State Education Department in August 1980 and awarded a two-year demonstration grant to encourage replication. Judging by the demand for the earlier experimental edition, the *WEDGE Manual* has fulfilled its purpose in assisting teachers to create a classroom climate where real writing can be inspired, valued, and enjoyed.

Charlotte Frank
Executive Director
Division of Curriculum and Instruction

The University of the State of New York
Education Department

CERTIFICATE OF VALIDATION

Awarded to the Board of Education of

The City of New York

For successfully meeting validation requirements
applied by the New York State Education Department
in establishing the exemplariness of the project entitled:

WEDGE - Improvement of Basic Expository Writing

January 26 - 1981
Date

Commissioner of Education

Acknowledgments

Writing Every Day Generates Excellence, a manual for the teaching of writing, was prepared as a project of the Division of Curriculum and Instruction, Charlotte Frank, Executive Director, through the Office of Curriculum Development and Support, Morris Freedman, Director (Acting), under a New York State Education Department ESEA Title IV C Developer Grant for the improvement of Writing (WEDGE).

In August of 1980, WEDGE was validated by the New York State Education Department as an exemplary program and was awarded an ESEA IV C Demonstration Grant to encourage replication.

Anita Wilkes Dore, Director of the Center for Communication Arts, Edith Novod, Assistant to the Director, and Muriel Mandell, WEDGE Coordinator, organized and supervised the entire project and were directly involved in the preparation of the manual.

The principal writer and researcher was Muriel Mandell. Contributing writers were Anita Wilkes Dore; Edith Novod; Douglas Berman, Assistant Principal, Sarah Hale Vocational High School; Alexander T. Hamilton, Assistant Principal, Francis Lewis High School; John Marcatante, Assistant Principal, Astoria Intermediate School.

Lessons, activities and editorial assistance were supplied by Jane Acosta, I.S. 24R; Mary Alessandrelli and Sister Jean William Bromberg, St. Joseph H.S.; Carol Cohen, J.H.S. 68K, Sheila Conticello, Washington Irving H.S.; Olive Francks and Marilyn Funes, Communication Arts Unit; Dorothy Green, P.S. 19M; Eileen Hudson, John Adams H.S.; Renee Kelvin, Eastern District H.S.; Cynthia List, Jane Addams Vocational H.S.; Stanley Schwartz, William Maxwell Vocational H.S.; Madeline Staffanell, Flushing H.S.; Elliott Upton, P.S. 35X; Mary Wolfson, P.S. 236K.

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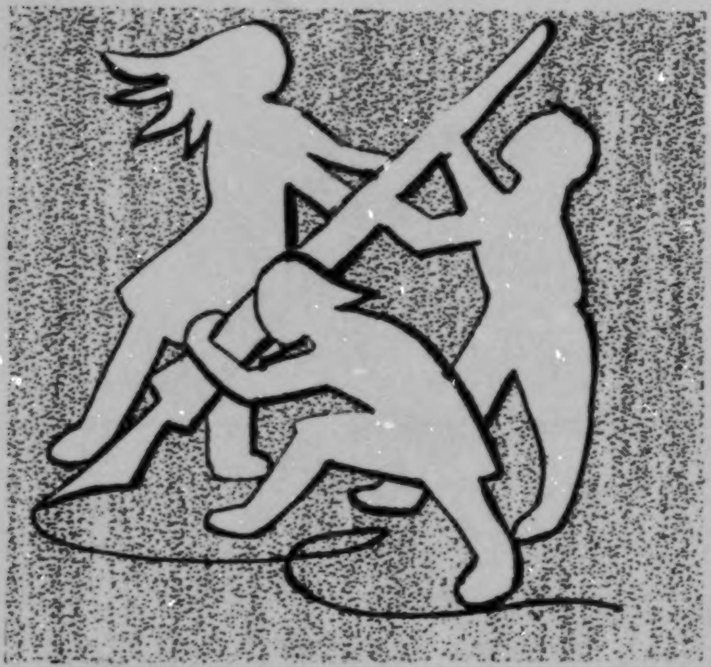
If people cannot write well, they cannot think well. And if they cannot think well, others will do the thinking for them.

George Orwell
(1903-1950 A.D.)

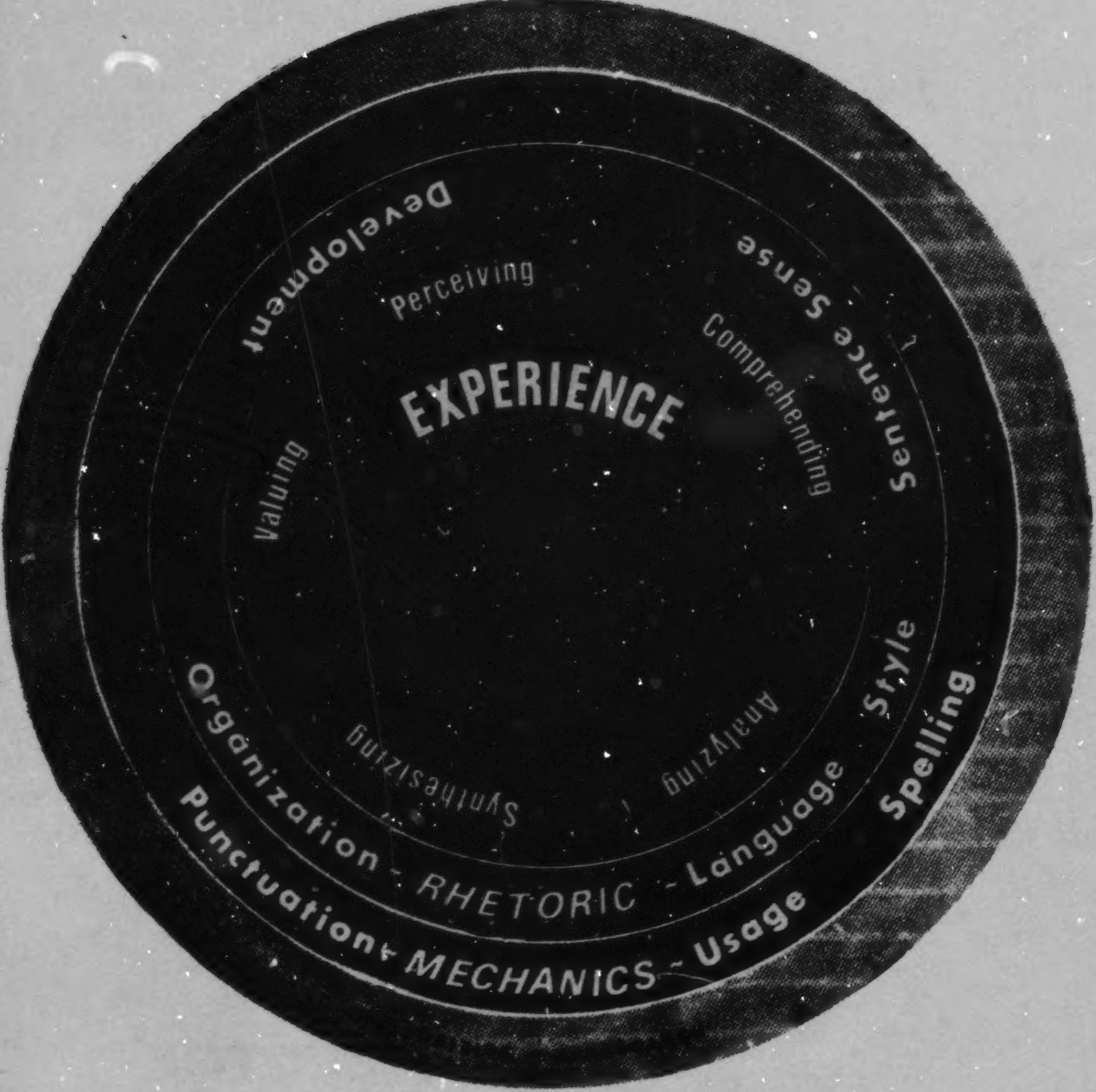


Drawing by Daniel O'Neill

Without the force of words we can never know ourselves.

Confucius
(551-479 B.C.)

Writing Every Day Generates Excellence


EXPERIENCE
Perceiving
Comprehending
Analyzing
Synthesizing
Valuing
Development
Sentence Sense
Style
Organization - RHETORIC - Language
Spelling
Punctuation - MECHANICS - Usage

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1. Introduction

Learning to write is in some respects like learning to ride a bicycle.

We can be told or shown how to move our feet on the pedals and where to sit on the seat to balance, but we don't learn to ride until we get on the bicycle and practice riding, perhaps with a supporting hand on the back wheel to lessen our fear of falling.

Similarly, learning to write requires practice writing. And writing and writing and writing.

For the novice writer, a supportive classroom, with classmates guided to be accepting and helpful, like the hand on the back wheel of the bicycle, lessens the fear of failing and encourages the willingness to take risks. So, too, does an involved and responsive teacher who writes and shares that writing with the students.

It is to be hoped that our goals for our students are not confined to learning school survival skills. It is to be hoped that we can help them to acquire the broader literacy that both enables and encourages the use of writing for communication and self-expression.

As often as possible, then, in preference to imposing artificial school-made assignments, it is important to permit options, to recognize and create situations where students need and want to use written language. Real letters (a card to a sick classmate, an order for a free item, an application for a job, a response to a school situation) naturally establish the level of language for a specific audience and involve a real world response to the writing.

At the very least, situations that are real for the student should be simulated: describe a lost child or a stolen wallet; report an accident; recommend a restaurant, a movie, a day trip.

It helps the student to be made aware that the act of writing itself often serves to order our thoughts, sometimes even stimulates thought. Not every piece of writing can be outlined first. Sometimes it is better to talk or list or plunge right in and write (See free writing, pp. 24-25)

It helps the student to be made aware that writing and editing are two different skills, and that the writer must focus on what is being said before worrying about how it is being said, or whether or not it is being said correctly. The conventions of writing are tools for clarifying the expression of ideas; they are not more important than the ideas.

It helps the student to be made aware that in the real world, as in the school world, the reader often judges the importance of the message by the way it is told. And so it is important that writing be followed by revising and editing and proofreading.

On the other hand, it is necessary for us as teachers to remember that workbook exercises or drills on usage, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, style, organizaiton, *cannot substitute for writing.* These should be the supporting activities growing out of the writing itself. Further, researchers* have concluded that the formal teaching of English grammar, whether traditional or transformational, has virtually no influence on the improvement of writing of a typical secondary school student. Time for teaching of grammar, then, should not be considered writing time.

Routines should be established so that some writing is done every day, even if it is confined on some days to a five-minute "do-now" or a journal entry which may serve as raw material for later development.

All writing should be kept, preferably in individual student folders or envelopes, with free writing, drafts, revisions attached to the finished pieces. Students may want to keep their journals separately.

Student folders, whether stored in a file cabinet, a locker shelf or a cardboard box, should be freely accessible so that students can enter the classroom and work independently.

The classroom itself should reflect a respect for student writing – and provide a motivation for revision and editing – with bulletin boards, cassette tapes, scrapbooks, class magazines, and other devices for "publishing" and "broadcasting."

The checklists which follow describe the ideal writing classroom. Analyze them and see whether there are suggestions which can be helpful to you in encouraging your students to write better.

The chapters which develop suggested teaching strategies, activities, materials, and sample lessons may be useful in achieving the major goal of helping students learn to write.

---

* W.B. Elley, I.H. Barkan, H. Lamb and M. Wyllie, "The Role of Grammar in the Secondary School English Curricula," *Research in the Teaching of English,* **10**: No. 1, Spring 1976, p.5.

MODEL WRITING CLASSROOM
OBSERVER AND SELF-EVALUATIVE CHECKLIST

This checklist should be used three times during the school year. The scale of 1–3 is explained below.

School: ________________________

Teacher: ____________________ *Class:* ____________

3–Strong *2–Acceptable* *1–Needs Attention*

Sept.	Jan.	June	Classroom Climate
			1. A climate of trust is created so that students trust both teacher and classmates to deal with writing sensitively.
			2. Teacher risks sharing his/her own writing with the students and encourages constructive student reaction.
			3. Teacher shows interest in and encourages student writing.
			4. Alternative writing assignments are permitted.
			5. Teacher responds to the content in student writing with constructive questions and comments.
			6. Peer response (individual or group) is structured so that it is specific, helpful, and independent of the teacher.
			7. Students are encouraged to experiment and take risks in writing.
			8. Students frequently hear and read examples of good professional and student writing.

Sept.	Jan.	June	Classroom Routines
			9. Routines are established so that the students are accustomed to write daily.
			10. Students have easy access to their writing folders or envelopes.
			11. Groups are set up as needed with specific tasks, so that they can work independently.
			12. A classroom library of resource materials (dictionary, thesaurus, style manual, handbook) is available for student use.
			13. An Escape Hatch with alternate assignments is updated periodically. (See pp. 30-34.)
			14. The classroom has student writing posted regularly.
			15. Materials on professional writers and their writing are displayed.

Classroom Materials

The classroom has available the following:

Sept.	Jan.	June	
			16. a folder or envelope for each student
			17. several dictionaries on various levels
			18. a thesaurus (for elementary students, a junior alphabetical thesaurus)
			19. handbooks, grammars, and/or style manuals
			20. visual stimuli such as posters, pictures, realia
			21. auditory stimuli – records, cassettes
			22. classroom library if possible*
			23. publishing/writing corner
			24. access to duplicating machines
			25. professional library (in school, department, office, or classroom) including such titles as:

a) Cassedy, Sylvia, *In Your Own Words*
b) Elbow, Peter, *Writing Without Teachers*
c) Moffett, James and Wagner, Betty Jane, *Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-13* – 2nd Edition
d) Macrorie, K., *Writing to be Read*
e) Shaughnessy, Mina, *Errors and Expectations*
f) Strunk, W. and White, E.B., *Elements of Style*

Pupil Participation

Each student in the class:

Sept.	Jan.	June	
			26. keeps all written work in a folder or notebook
			27. makes journal entries from 3 to 5 times a week
			28. uses journal entries as a source of ideas
			29. makes rough drafts or outlines as needed
			30. shares work in progress with other students and/or teachers
			31. listens to other students' work attentively, offering constructive feedback
			32. revises and edits when necessary
			33. uses dictionary, thesaurus, handbook
			34. proofreads all final drafts
			35. increases amount of writing†

*** Students can contribute, or a loan may be made from the school library.**

† British high school students wrote 1,000 words a week, according to Shaughnessy, *Errors and Expectations* p. 14

Teaching Procedures

Sept.	Jan.	June	
			36. Student needs are met by individualizing and grouping instruction.
			37. Prewriting activities are used to motivate, stimulate, seed or organize writing.
			38. Free writing is used as a technique to get started and for obtaining raw material. (See p. 24.)
			39. Cycling coupled with grouping is used as a technique for structuring rewriting. (See pp. 25,90.)
			40. Classroom writing activity time is varied from 5-minute "do-nows" to full-period lessons.
			41. Classroom opportunity is provided for guided writing, editing, and proofreading.
			42. Some of the writing involves transactions in real situations – forms, messages, notices, and letters – with students guided to use style and language appropriate for particular audience.
			43. Writing instruction includes the following:
			a) narration
			b) description
			c) exposition
			d) persuasion
			44. Writing activities are meshed with literature units where appropriate.
			45. Writing activities are meshed with the content of social studies, science, and other subjects where appropriate.
			46. Motivation and outlets for writing are provided through class magazines, reading of student writing on PA system, posting, etc.
			47. Records of each student's work and needs are maintained.
			48. Written work of students is used to plan remedial activities for whole class, group or individual.
			49. Individual conferences are planned when class is engaged in reading or writing.
			50. Student progress is assessed periodically.

2. Getting Started

The lessons which follow are a framework for initiating a writing curriculum. They cover approximately a month of daily activities. Some may be either telescoped or spread out over two or three days, depending on the needs of your students. *But time should be devoted to writing every day.*

The game format and the word play are designed to set a non-threatening, supportive tone from the outset, while developing language competency and flexibility. You may want to substitute for or supplement these activities with others from your own repertoire. For example, a game called Hinky Pinky provides practice in rhyming nouns; Coffee Pot provides practice in the use of adverbs; games with puns and jokes provide practice in multiple meanings.

All such fun with words should culminate with writing by students, however brief. This is in line with the need to provide experiences about which the student can write.

Among other activities, the journal and the escape hatch are designed to give the students a sense of control over their own writing. The journal has the added virtue of making daily writing a routine.

Free writing helps establish the priority of composing over editing. Grouping and letter writing provide both audience and purpose for student writing.

Included, too, is an initial lesson on narrative writing to give guidance to a form that beginning writers enjoy. It also supplies an early opportunity to mesh writing with literature.

Prewriting activities should include word play and fun with language at the same time that various other goals are pursued. Note these games incidentally reinforce the use of the adjective and metaphor in description.

Lesson 1: *Fun with Words*

Aim:

To introduce the teacher and the students to each other through the use of games which give practice in speaking and opportunity for word play

Development:

Game A – Alliteration

Teacher and students introduce themselves by giving their own first name in combination with a describing word that starts with the same sound as the first letter of their name (an alliterative adjective).

- Teacher starts off; student No. 1 repeats what the teacher has said and adds his/her introduction.
- Student No. 2 repeats what the teacher and student No. 1 have said and adds his/her own, and so forth.

  (Examples: He is sympathetic Sidney. You are cordial Cora. I am eager Edith.)
- When memory starts to fail, start the game over again with the next student becoming No. 1.

Teacher may need to use several students' names as examples, perhaps writing them on the board to draw attention to the matching initial sounds.

(See appendix p. 155, for student samples.)

Game B – Metaphor

Teacher draws a diagram on the board and fills in the column headings, using the examples below or appropriate alternatives; *e.g.,* flower, car, piece of furniture. Students are directed to do likewise in their notebooks.

I	II	III
animal	food	character from a book

Teacher instructs students to answer the following questions.

- If you were an animal, what would you be? Write it down in Column 1.
- If you were a food, which would you be? Enter in Column II.
- If you were a character in a book, who would you be? (For younger children, if you were a character in a fairy tale or story, who would you be?) Enter this in Column III.

Then teacher instructs students to explain why; *e.g.,* "If I were an animal, I would be a lion because I'm strong and brave." "If I were a food, I'd be a lemon pie because I have my sweet and sour moments."

Have the students write their own in their notebooks. Students then share with the class. (See appendix, p. 156, for student samples.)

*Game C – Simile**

Teacher asks one student: "Are you more like a Volkswagen than a Cadillac?" "Why?"

Sample response: "I'm more like a Volkswagen because I'm small and thrifty."

Teacher continues questioning, using the following or similar pairs.

- knapsack or briefcase
- German shepherd or poodle
- raincoat or bathing suit
- bread or cake
- ocean or pool
- lion or snake
- drum or violin
- butterfly or bee

This activity may start orally and be followed by a written activity in which students are asked to select one of the above and to explain their choices.

It is advisable to start with items the students already know. Before asking younger or less verbal students if they are more like one thing than another, the teacher may have to discuss every pair of items with them to make sure the children know the characteristics of each item. (See appendix, p. 157, for) student samples.)

Writing Follow-up

The students write anonymously about their *feelings* while they participated, or waited to participate, in the games.

(See appendix, pp. 165-166, for sample student reactions.)

---

* Games B and C adapted from materials developed by Charles Chew and Sheila Schlawin of the New York State Education Department.

With competition from the telephone and the tape recorder as well as from the camera, it is often necessary to justify the need for learning to write effectively. An emphasis on experimenting and new techniques often fights inertia and produces a special excitement and interest.

Lesson 2: *Motivating the Study of Writing*

Aim:

To explore occasions and situations when writing will be required

Development:

The teacher asks: "When does the average person write? Why do you write?" The teacher tries to elicit some of the following:

- You send letters sometimes, less often than you mean to but nearly as often as you have to.
- You send cards for birthdays or holidays.
- You pay bills and sometimes have to send letters saying, "What do you mean I owe you for two camels delivered on the 17th of May to my caravan in the Bronx? My caravan is in Queens and I didn't . . ."
- You leave notes for family members to buy eggs, or get the stuff out of the cleaners, or meet for dinner at Steve's, or "Don't forget to take the chopped meat out of the freezer if you want to eat tonight."
- You fill out forms and applications and assorted official papers to drive a car and pay your taxes.
- You write invitations to your friends for parties.
- You send for a free item.
- You give directions for reaching your home.
- You submit your writing to a class-made newspaper.

Follow-up

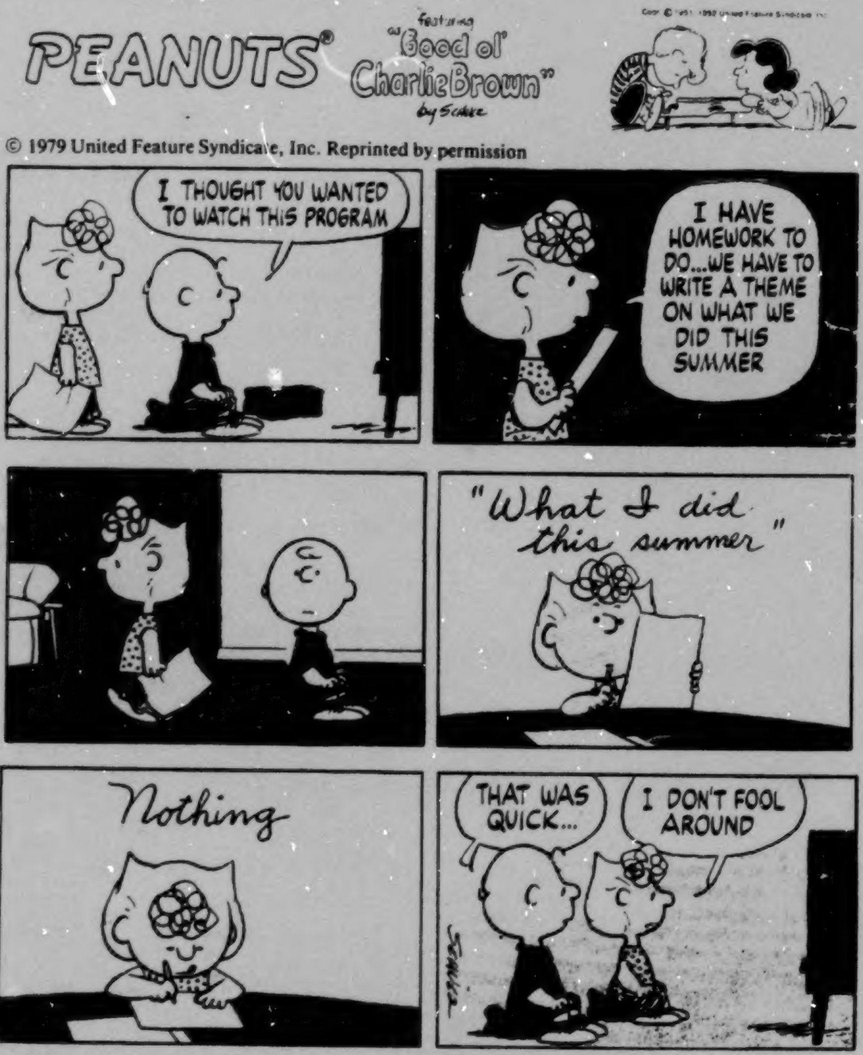
After exploring all the practical occasions, the teacher elicits or explains that some people write for the same reason that others play musical instruments or engage in sports – it is something that can be both effort and fun at the same time. It gives a feeling of satisfaction, sometimes joy, which answers a need for self-expression and creativity. Sometimes this need is met by talking or joking or telling stories. Writing however, is something you can do alone – and then share with others.

The students write for fifteen minutes on "Why I Like (or Dislike) Writing." At the end of this period, the teacher allows five minutes for rereading, editing, and proofreading.

This composition may be used as a pretest, and should be preserved to compare attitude and skills with those in evidence at the end of the term. For evaluating, see chapter 7, pp. 150-154.

Other possible topics for pre- and post-testing will be found in the appendix on p. 177.

The teacher may want to explain that the class members will have an opportunity to share one another's writing, to see and hear writing from other schools, and even to have their material broadcast on the radio (or public address system).


PEANUTS®
featuring "Good ol' Charlie Brown" by Schulz
I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO WATCH THIS PROGRAM
I HAVE HOMEWORK TO DO...WE HAVE TO WRITE A THEME ON WHAT WE DID THIS SUMMER
"What I did this summer"
Nothing
THAT WAS QUICK...
I DON'T FOOL AROUND
Schulz

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The journal, a record of events and feelings as perceived by the writer, serves the function of getting students into the habit of writing, of increasing their powers of observation, of providing an outlet for clarification and expression of personal feelings. Entries need not be read by the teacher but in most instances they should be checked in recognition that they have been written. Some entries the student will want to share and some will serve as raw material for later writing. Most students learn to enjoy and depend on journal writing. The teacher who writes and shares that writing with the class serves as a model and adds to the students' motivation.

Lesson 3: *The Journal*

Aim:

To introduce journal writing and encourage its use as a regular activity

Development:

If you were a painter, how would you "save" the sights you saw to use at another time?

- By sketching or painting.

If you were a photographer, what would you do?

- Take many pictures and preserve them in an album or in some other way, so that you can retrieve them.

If you were a writer, what would you do?

- Many writers, both professional and amateur, use journals which become storehouses of ideas and vignettes. This is a writer's way of sketching. The entries can be for your eyes only.

This term you will be asked to keep a journal. You will have the first five minutes of every period (three times a week) for this activity.

Date your entries and keep your writing in chronological order, in a separate notebook or folder which you may label or decorate as you like. (When journal writing becomes a habit, students may write in their journals at home.)

On a separate sheet of paper, write today's date.

- List ten to twenty things you love to do.
- Star the things you love to do the best.
- Place a check after the things you love to do alone.
- List three things that happened, or that you read about recently, that interested you.

You now have your own personalized list of topics. When you are stuck, go back to the list and pick *one* of them to write about for your journal entry.

For the first entry, let's each of us write down what happened and how we felt yesterday during the games, the fight, assembly, line-up, science lesson, story hour, or the like.

An in-school episode helps the teacher and class members to ask necessary appropriate questions that may jog the memory and enable the writer to be more specific. But it should be made clear that journal entries are intended to be of use to the students, and therefore may take any form a student wishes and *need not be shared.*

Follow-up Suggestions

Some teachers have found it helpful to have a suggested topic on the board each day, which the students may use if they don't have anything in particular they want to write about.

Yesterday, ____________ happened.

____________ wasn't fair to me.

Yesterday, my friend told me ____________.

Yesterday, I was happy that ____________.

Last night I dreamed ____________.

What went wrong this morning?

On the bus or subway I noticed ____________.

Yesterday I ate ____________.

Later in the term, newspaper items can serve as a source once or twice a week, moving the student away from personal concerns and toward forms of persuasive writing. (See p. 57.)

(For other references to journal writing, see pp. 45, 54, 81-82, 83)

Lesson 4: *Prewriting Activities*

Aim:

To employ list making for the expansion of ideas

Development:

*a. *Write the word* "foods" on the board vertically. Ask the class to name foods beginning with each letter, *e.g.:*

Fruitcake
Oranges
Olives
Doughnuts
Sugar

Ask students to write the alphabet on a sheet of paper, using a new line for each letter of the alphabet. Ask them to name a food for each letter of the alphabet. This can be a group activity.

Do the same with any other generic word: flowers, furniture, sports, animals, clothes.

b. List all the *uses* you can think of for the following: (This can be done as group work.)

- a paper clip
- a toothpick
- an empty soda can
- a shoelace
- a button

(See p. 52 for use in expository writing.)

---

*From a workshop conducted by Joan Berbrich for WEDGE teachers, May 1978.

Lesson 5: *Prewriting Activities*

Aim:

To engage students in word play and stimulate them to use onomatopoetic words and to create new words as needed

Development:

1. Prepare in advance to have some or all of the following "sounds" available for your lesson in onomatopoeia. Using a familiar context, such as a radio program or a TV commercial which requires sound effects, ask the students to listen closely to these sounds, and then to describe what words each of the sounds conveys.

   Sounds for listening:

   Pieces of Paper (writing paper, cellophane, aluminum foil, oaktag, etc.)

   Tear one piece of paper (slowly, rapidly).

   Crinkle one piece of paper (loudly, softly).

   Try another way to make the piece of paper "talk."

   Chalk

   Write on the chalkboard (broad strokes punctuated and staccato sounds, small dots or repeated sounds).

   Let the chalk "scratch" and "squeak."

   A Basketball or Ordinary Rubber Ball

   Bounce the ball (try varying speeds and places in the room).

   A Ruler

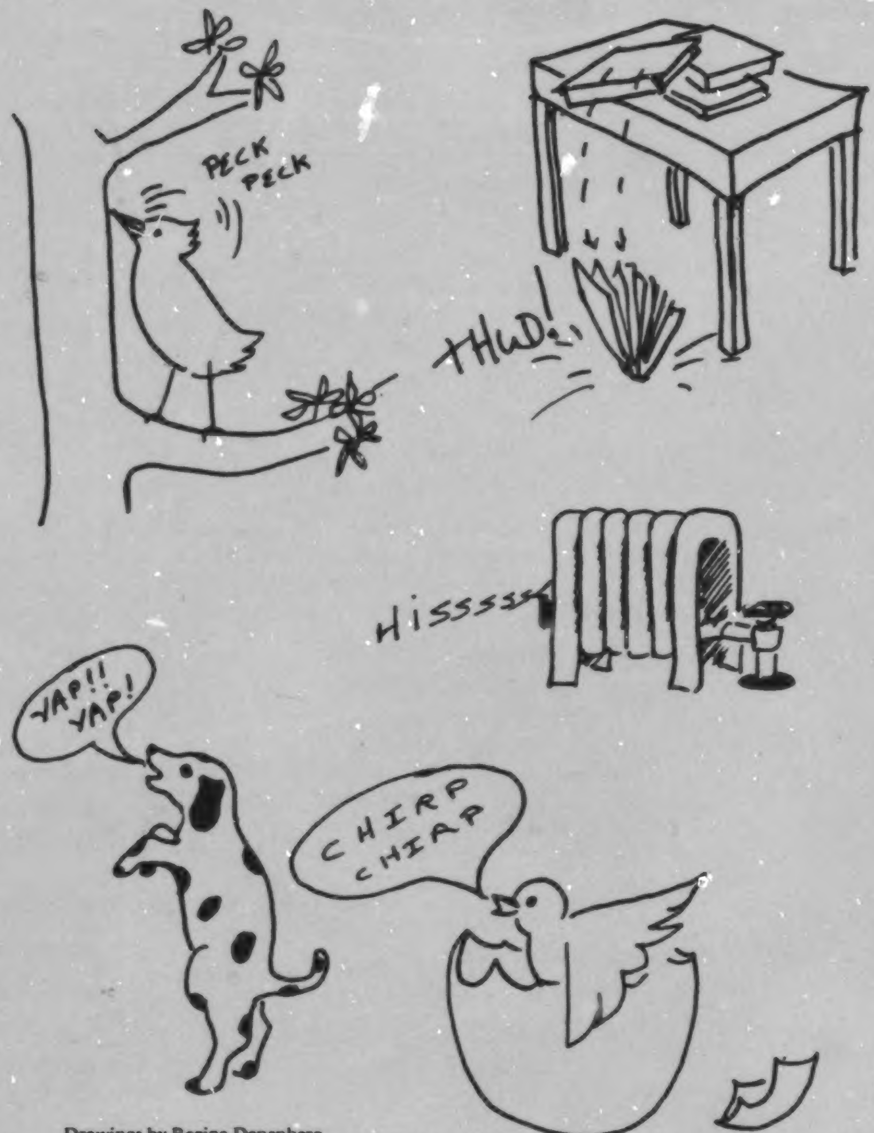
   Hit the ruler on a desk and use varying intensities and patterns).

   A Pair of Scissors

   Cut a piece of paper (or try another kind of material).

2. Pair off with a partner and see how many words you can come up with that imitate sounds. Some examples are listed below.

   bang
   bellow
   boom
   clatter
   crackle
   crash
   crunch
   cuckoo
   hiss
   hubbub
   hurrah
   moan
   murmur
   roar
   sizzle
   snarl
   sputter
   thrash
   thwack
   yap
   yelp
   yip



Drawings by Regina Denenberg

3. If students are unable to think of enough onomatopoetic words by working in pairs, ask the entire class to offer examples to be written on the chalkboard. Perhaps the students should think about one type of sound at a time, *i.e.,* all animal sounds, or all water sounds, or all hitting or dropping sounds – whichever grouping will best stimulate the students to come up with words.

4. Students like to hear the attempts of others to describe sounds with words. R.R. Knudson's *Zanballer* (Dell Publishing, 1974) has some good examples.

Lesson 6: *Activities to Expand Language*

Aim:

To stimulate increased precision in writing

To enlarge word power by engaging students in word play

Development:

Teacher says: "Think of words that will make someone see the color yellow."

- Give the students a few examples and elicit others:

egg yolk
mustard
rain slicker
No. 2 pencil
baby chick
buttercup
taxicab
corn

Students may work in pairs on their lists, enter them into their notebooks, and then share them with the class.

Teacher says: "Think of words that make someone *hear* the color yellow."

popping of corn
peep of a canary
crunch of autumn leaves
goldenrod sneeze
screech of a taxi

Teacher says: "Think of words that make someone *smell* the color yellow."

banana
buttered corn
scrambled eggs
lemon meringue

Teacher says: "Think of words that make someone *taste* the color yellow."

honey
sponge cake
odor of a lemon

Teacher says: "Think of words that make someone *feel* the color yellow."

the warmth of the spring sun
cool moon
happiness

Teacher says: "Think of expressions that use the word *yellow.* What do they imply? Notice how words are stretched beyond their meaning."

calling a person yellow
yellow dog contract
yellow journalism
yellow jack

Writing Follow-up

- Students in pairs write a poem that makes someone experience the color *yellow* through his/her five senses. (For samples, some based on a Carl Sandburg poem, see appendix, p.159.)*
- Apply the word expansion technique in descriptive writing. (See p. 69.)
- The same procedure can be followed with other color words. Red, for instance, would evoke tomato, radish, fire engine, blood, coral, etc. A variation would be to call for a precise shade of red: crimson, scarlet, vermillion.

---

*See also Kenneth Koch, *Wishes, Lies and Dreams* (New York: Vantage Books, 1970) and Mary O'Neill, *Hailstones and Halibut Bones* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1961).

This activity may make students understand how a writer's choice of words influences a reader.

Lesson 7: *Activities to Expand Vocabulary*

Aim:

To sensitize pupils to the special qualities of words and to help them to use more precise words in their writing and speaking

Development:

1. *Teacher says to the class:* Think of your best friend. Then give me three or four words telling me the following:*

   How does your friend look?

   How does your friend act?

   How do you feel when you are with this friend?

   Teacher lists on the board the various describing words given by the class.

   Then the teacher says: Now think of someone you dislike. Give me three or four words answering the same questions.

   Which collection of words was positive?

   Which was negative?

   What are the people really like?

2. Which of these words would you use for a politician if you liked him? If you disliked him?

   clever
   intelligent
   crafty
   sly
   shrewd
   brilliant
   wide-awake

   penetrating
   perceptive
   ingenious
   sagacious
   brainy
   wise

   Which sounds trustworthy? Which sounds sneaky? Which sounds young? Which sounds older?

3. If you went on a diet and it succeeded, would you want to be:

   thin?
   underweight?
   slender?

   skinny?
   scrawny?
   emaciated?

   skeletal?

   Which one is high fashion and which is malnutrition?

---

* Activity presented at WEDGE workshop by Josephine Gemake of St. John's University.

Take the diet list and divide it

+	–	#
slender	scrawny	
thin	emaciated	
	skeletal	

Are there any words that aren't either + or –? Call that column #, meaning neutral.

4. Which suggests something expensive?

    old
    used
    second-hand
    previously owned
    antique
    ancient
    antiquated
    obsolete
    old-fashioned

5. Would you be making a better impression if you were:

    inexperienced?
    young?
    immature?
    fresh?
    juvenile?
    up-to-date?
    modern?

6. Are you moving more quickly if you:

    gallop?
    parade?
    inch?
    skip?
    walk?
    sidle?

Follow-up Lessons

1. Write a paragraph describing a person or a place or a thing for the class. Have the students change the tone from positive to derogatory, derogatory to positive, by substituting related but not really synonymous words, like *scrawny* for *slender.*

2. Teach the use of the thesaurus. Keep several copies where writing is going on.

Free writing is a prewriting technique developed by Ken Macrorie to help students get started writing. It unlocks those who believe they have nothing to say and frees those who freeze because they focus on editing while they are composing. It is the first phase of a total process which should eventually involve revising, editing, and proofreading.

Lesson 8: *Free Writing**

Aim: To introduce free writing as a method for getting started

Development:

Teacher explains the process that most professional writers go through to shape their work: fast first drafts, followed by rewriting over a period of time, sometimes years.

- The process shows us that our ideas are not clear, not complete, the first time our pens hit paper.
- The act of trying to write shows us what we have to say.

Teacher says: "In a minute we will have ten minutes of *free writing.* This means you will start writing at the signal I will give, and you will not stop until I tell you to stop. Even if you get stuck, you must continue to write. Write 'I don't know what to write, I'm stuck, etc.,' but keep writing. Don't plan ahead. Just write as quickly as you can."

Teacher writes on the board: "My Earliest Memory of School," or some other suitable topic, and says: "This is the topic for this free writing." (See pp. 27,28 for suggestions.)

Teacher asks students to take out pen and paper, and then focuses the attention of the class. Readiness for free writing is important. A half-minute of silence before giving the signal to begin will help avoid some students getting a late start or interrupting the group with comments after the signal is given.

The teacher can suggest that students think of all the parts of the body which help us to write: the head, neck, shoulders, arms, hands and fingers. They can spend the half-minute saying "My head is relaxed. My neck is relaxed, etc." Later, as the students get used to the cycle-writing process, they will not need directions or suggestions during the half-minute of silence. At a signal, students and teacher begin to write. (At first it may be necessary for the teacher to start a few minutes later and finish a few minutes early, in order to monitor and encourage students.) At the end of the ten minutes, everyone in the room stops writing.

Teacher says: "Read through your own free writing and select the parts you like. You are your own first reader."

Teacher continues: "Now that we have given an initial reaction to our own work, let's also receive reactions from the class to one piece of free writing."

---

* Introduced to WEDGE teachers in a workshop by Donald McQuade and Sandra Schor of Queens College.

Teacher writes on the board:

- What ideas are presented in the piece? (What is it about?) Summarize in a sentence or two.
- What needs to be clarified?
- What part did you like best? What do you need or want to hear more about?

The teacher or student volunteer reads aloud his/her own writing. The writer may leave out any part he or she does not want to share.

The teacher asks for volunteers to answer the questions and jots down students' suggested answers on the board. The author of the piece keeps personal notes for future consideration in preparing a first draft. The author compares his/her own favorite part with that of his/her peers to decide later which suggestions, if any, will be used or modified.

If there is time, more students volunteer to read their free writing and the class responds to questions on the board, with one-third assigned to concentrate on each of the three different aspects of the writing (summary, part to be expanded, favorite).

Organizing the class into groups of four students can provide feedback for student writing. This not only lightens teacher responsibility for reading every composition but also supplies the broader audience which may possibly motivate the students to write more honestly in the first place, and then to revise and edit their writing.

The initial breakdown of the whole class into the smaller units may be more or less random – perhaps based on adjacent seating. Friends, however, should be separated in order to provide fresh, less-biased ears, as well as opportunities for establishing rapport through the sharing of one another's writing.

Particularly successful as a follow-up to free writing (see pp. 24-25), grouping depends on each member of the group having a specific task and knowing exactly how to proceed. Young writers can learn to help one another.

Lesson 9: *Small Group Reaction to Free Writing*

Aim:

To encourage constructive peer reaction through the use of small groups

Development:

Teacher reviews procedure for reacting to free writing by placing on the board the three questions:

- What ideas are presented in the piece? (What is it about?) Summarize in a sentence or two.
- What needs to be clarified?
- What part did you like best? What do you need or want to hear more about?

The class breaks up into groups of four. Each student, in turn, reads his or her free writing.

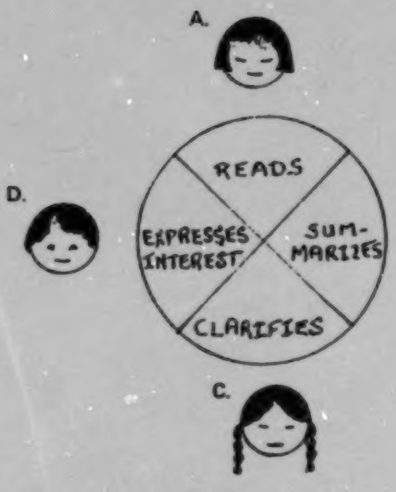


FIGURE 1: A READS

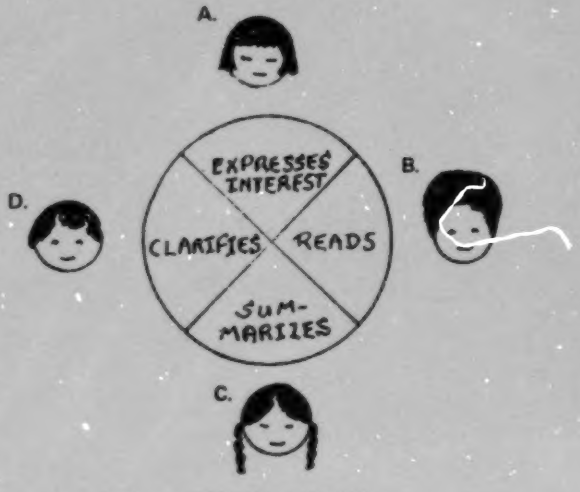


FIGURE 2: B READS

Each of the other students in the group takes a turn answering one of the questions, with the writer taking notes and jotting down suggestions given. As each student in the group reads in turn, the questions are rotated. (See Figures 1-4 below.)

The interaction between writer and audience often involves all members of the small group in all the questions.

The teacher circulates to help those groups who want help, but is careful not to intrude unnecessarily.

The free writing is put aside for a later lesson, possibly to be the basis of a first draft.

You may repeat this process within a few days, using such stimuli as:

- I wish . . .
- If only . . .
- If I had a million . . .
- I get angry when . . .

More about the follow-up to free writing will be found on pp. 29, 87-90. Free writing is only the first phase of a cycle that involves writing, revising, editing and proofreading.

(Samples of student reaction will be found on pp. 167-168.)

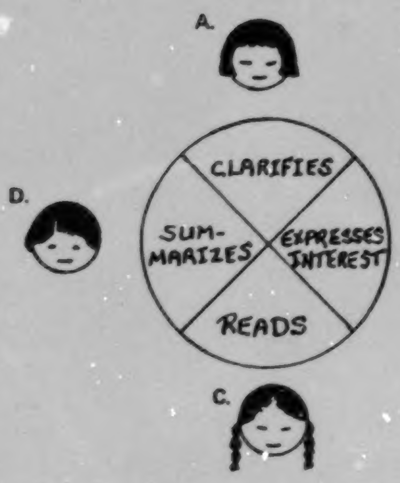

A.
B.
D.
CLARIFIES
SUM-
MARIZES
EXPRESSES
INTEREST
READS
C.

FIGURE 3: C READS

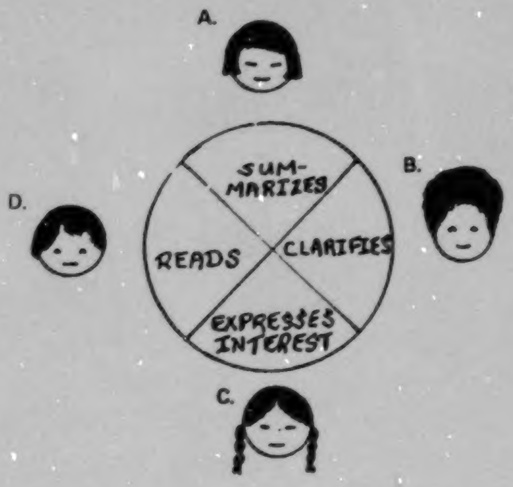

A.
B.
D.
SUM-
MARIZES
READS
CLARIFIES
EXPRESSES
INTEREST
C.

FIGURE 4: D READS

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR FREE WRITING

An important prerequisite for free writing is a topic of interest to most students. The following topics were used successfully in school classrooms.

1. Where I Hang Out
2. Memories
3. I Feel Angry When . . .
4. Passing a Bakery
5. My Most Embarrassing Experience
6. My Most Frightening Experience
7. Something I Like
8. Something I Dislike
9. An Event That Changed Me
10. An Event That Impressed Me
11. The Day It Snowed . . .
12. An Age I'd Like to Be
13. Having An Older (Younger) Brother (Sister) Is Fun/Is a Pain
14. Changes I Would Like to Make in My School
15. How Not to Do Something
16. How to Get Lost Coming to School
17. How to Make a Mess
18. What Scares Me the Most
19. My Problem

Other topics, perhaps more suitable for younger pupils, are:

1. My Street (or Block)
2. My Best Friend
3. My Mother Makes Me . . .
4. I Wish I Were Old Enough to . . .
5. I Remember Learning How to . . .

Editorial topics can be used in free writing, with the publication of a class newspaper as motivation. Follow-up should include lessons dealing with organizing effective arguments.

1. Vocational Schools are Important
2. The Age for Compulsory Education Should Be Raised/Lowered

Also appropriate for use in free-writing are topics based on literature.

Whenever possible – and certainly for the first few months – most writing should be done in class to avoid over-reliance on outside help and to ensure the presence of the teacher. The teacher, as often as possible, uses his/her own writing for eliciting student reaction.

Lesson 10: *The First Draft*

Aim:

To provide opportunities for students to expand and develop free writing or rough material

To provide a model of peer response to a first draft

Development:

Teacher asks students to reread their free writing and look over the notations they have made of their peers' comments. They may use those comments in writing a first draft but, as writers, they are the sole judges of what to include, develop, or change.

While the students write, the teacher writes a first draft based on one of his/her own free-writing pieces, making use of suggestions offered by students (See Lesson 8, pp. 24-25.)

The teacher or a volunteer reads his/her draft to the class.

The following general questions may be used as a basis for discussion. Note that questions have been expanded from emphasis on content alone, in free writing, to focus on organization:

- Which parts, if any, are confusing?
- Do ideas follow each other in an order that makes sense? What, if anything, needs changing?
- Is there enough detail? What's missing?
- Can the opening be made more interesting? How?
- Is there a better way to end? How?

The students offer suggestions for improving the draft, as the teacher makes notes on the board.

The teacher may wish to refine student understanding by continuing the whole class discussion of the papers of one or two additional student volunteers.

If there is sufficient time, students may then form small groups for conferencing with each other. Otherwise, the first drafts, attached to the free writing on which they were based, are placed in the student folders for small group response after a few days. (See Chapter 5, pp. 87-103, for more on revision of students' first drafts.)

If some students are not "turned on" by the assignment for the day or by the "do-now," they can use materials from the Escape Hatch for motivation.

An Escape Hatch can be a bulletin board, an index box, or an envelope of photographs, posters, articles, cartoons, lyrics, poetry. Anything that will create student interest – preferably set up and maintained by rotating student committees – can be included. In certain classroom environments, a source book of stimuli such as *Dig U.S.A.** may be more manageable.

Whatever its form, the Escape Hatch can provide students with alternatives to any assigned topic or serve as a source for journal entries. At first, some students may make frequent use of the Escape Hatch, but gradually they will find less need for such an "out."

Lesson 11: *The Escape Hatch*†

Aim:

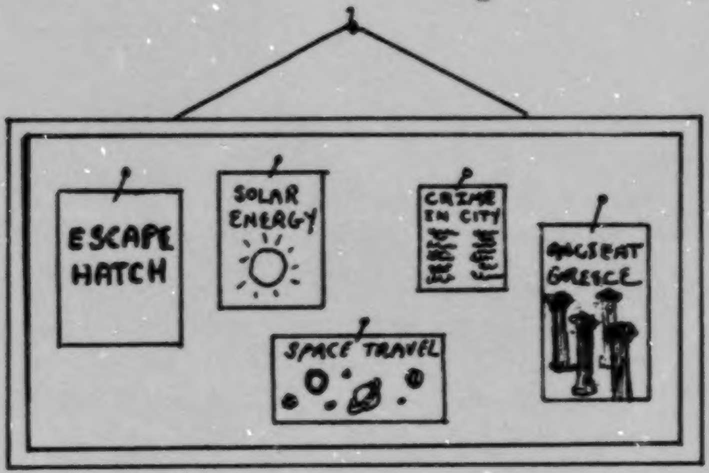
To provide a method of presenting options to writing assignments

Development:

The teacher explains the reason for an optional assignment or an Escape Hatch and presents samples such as the pictures and headlines that follow. A question or a title can serve as additional stimulus.

Ask for volunteers to be responsible for selecting items and keeping the display fresh and lively.

See the following pages for examples. You may want to duplicate them to serve as models.



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* Arthur Daigon and Ronald T. Lacone, *Dig U.S.A.* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971).

† From WEDGE workshop given by Stephen Dunning of the University of Michigan.

Life Is Unfair

New York Times

- Who ever said life is fair?
- What are some examples of unfairness?
- How can you change things to assure that people get equal shares/chances?

Questions Most Often Asked

New York Times

- What are the questions? Possible answers?

LOOKS AREN'T EVERYTHING

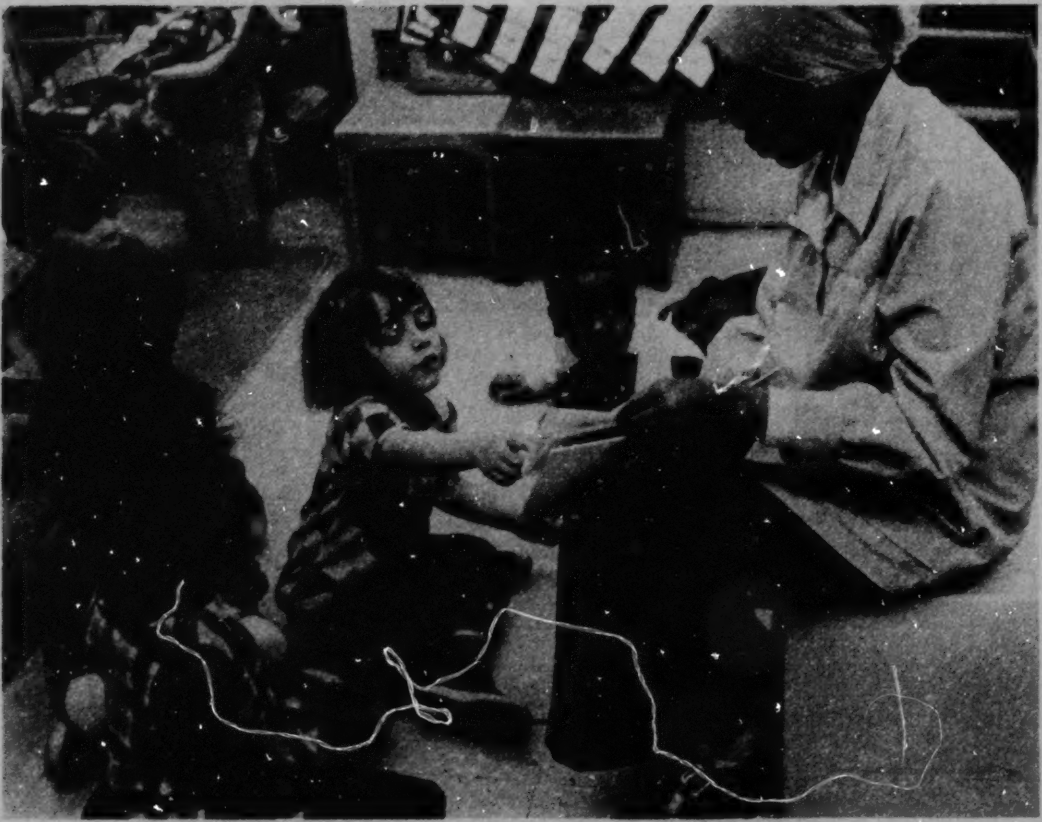
New York Magazine

- How do you feel about this statement?

HOW CAN YOU LIVE IN NEW YORK?

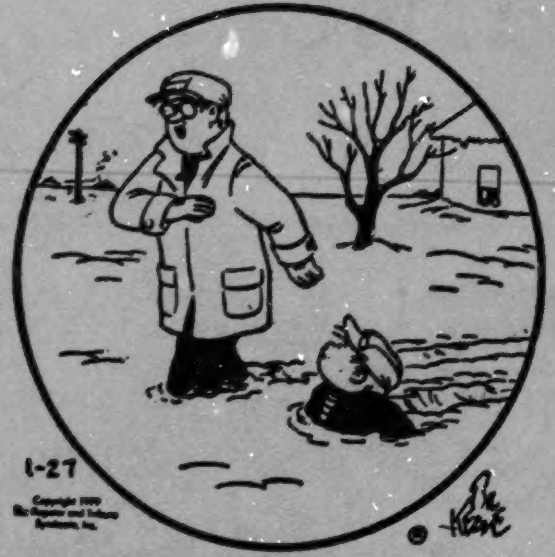
New York Magazine

- What do you reply to this question?
- Is there any other place to live?



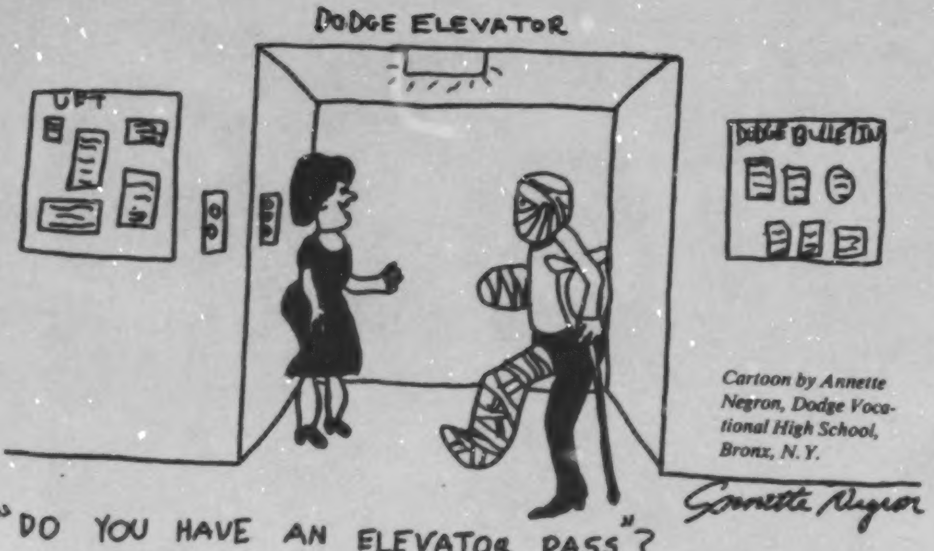
What do you remember about your early days at school?

The Family Circus by Bil Keane. Reprinted courtesy of the Register and Tribune Syndicate, Inc.



"This is nothing. When I was your age we had snow that came all the way up to here on me."

Photo New York City Board of Education, Division of Curriculum Development and Instruction.


DODGE ELEVATOR
UFT
DODGE BULLETIN
Annette Negron

Cartoon by Annette Negron, Dodge Vocational High School, Bronx, N.Y.

"DO YOU HAVE AN ELEVATOR PASS"?

Photo by Barbara Lavecchia

Photo by Herb Garo, from *Critical Issues*, page 15.

"Writing begins by notice. Taking notice of a spider scaling a web, taking notice of a football smacking the ground. Taking notice of a word that tingles your ear, taking notice of a subway's whine on the tracks. Taking notice of things, too, that you cannot see or hear, but only feel. Taking notice of the way you want to cry when you hear a special song, taking notice of the way your heart stops when you come upon a sparrow lying dead against the curb."*

Lesson 12: *Observing*

Aim:

To distinguish between seeing and observing

Development:

While the class is engaged in another activity, two of the students stage a fight, following a scenario privately agreed upon with the teacher; or a fellow teacher cooperates by making a scene (throwing papers around and pulling a student from the room, etc.).

Afterward, the teacher says to the class: "It all happened so quickly, I'm not sure what went on. What happened? Will each of you please jot it down as you saw it?"

Volunteers read their individual accounts and the class then discusses how they differ.

- The scene is restaged, this time with students consciously and deliberately observing what is going on.

Each student checks his/her notes to see what he/she missed or saw incorrectly the first time.

The class discusses the differences between the two accounts.

- Which is more accurate?
- Which is more detailed?
- What is the difference between "seeing" and "observing"?

See p. 47 in Chapter 3 and p. 69 in Chapter 4 for further lessons on observing.

---

* Sylvia Cassedy, *In Your Own Words* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1979).

A painless way to help students develop a narrative sense is to pair students and have them tell an anecdote to one another.

Lesson 13: *Developing Narrative Skills**

Aim:

To help students appreciate and participate in narration

Development:

Teacher models the use of personal material by reading a selection from Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn,* Richard Wright's *Black Boy,* Kathryn Forbes' *Mama's Bank Account,* Emily C. Neville's *It's Like This, Cat,* Eleanor Estes' *The Hundred Dresses,* William Saroyan's "First Day at School," or other material based on the author's own experiences.

Teacher or student volunteer tells an anecdote from his/her own experience.

Students are paired and invited to tell one another brief anecdotes or episodes (of two or three minutes duration).

Volunteers share the anecdotes with the whole class.

The class then discusses what makes an anecdote interesting (apart from effective oral delivery):

- Is the episode of *interest* to the audience? Does it have excitement, emotion, humor, suspense, or surprise?
- Does the story have a point?
- Does it build to a climax?
- Does it start at the right place?
- Does it end at the right place?
- Is it long-winded? Does it tell enough?
- Does it make good use of dialogue when needed?

Follow-up

Each narrator writes his/her episode. A variation would be to have each student write his/her partner's story.

(See Chapter 3, pp. 40, 41-45, and Chapter 4, pp. 79-82 for more on narrative writing. See pp. 157, 158, 160, 161 for student narratives.)

---

* Adaptation of a workshop activity by author Betty Miles.

Expressing their own ideas while imitating word patterns or sentence rhythms of another writer can start some students writing. They can use or vary an author's language, either completing one line or using the one line as the opening sentence for a more extended piece.

Lesson 14: *Starters* *

Aim:

To give students a starting sentence to stimulate student writing

Development:

1. Teacher selects an opening line or any provocative sentence from a piece of prose and writes it on the board. Together the class varies it and continues the story.
2. From lines selected by the teacher, students work alone, or in pairs, to modify and continue.

He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger.
Jack London, *To Build a Fire*

For example: *He worked awkwardly and reluctantly, unaware of . . .*

Once upon a sunny morning a man who sat in a breakfast nook looked up from his scrambled eggs to see a white unicorn with a golden horn quietly cropping roses in the garden.
James Thurber, "The Unicorn in the Garden,"
Fables For Our Times

Follow-up

Teacher asks each student to bring in the opening line, or a favorite line, from a book. Students are then paired, and they exchange favorite lines to continue the story.

The following are favorite lines submitted by students in Cynthia List's WEDGE class at Jane Addams Vocational High School in the Bronx.

The housekeeper knew how frightened a little boy could be about going to school.
William Saroyan, *The First Day of School*

There was no possibility of taking a walk that day.
Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*

It wasn't puppy love, or infatuation, nor love at first sight, or anything that people always talk about and laugh.
Maureen Daly, *Seventeenth Summer*

---

* From a WEDGE workshop conducted by Stephen Dunning of the University of Michigan.

A natural way to show the influence of an audience on writing is a letter-writing activity.

Lesson 15: *Suiting Language to Audience* *

Aim:

To demonstrate that audience influences a writer's choice of content, language, tone

Development:

Students write messages to various people on real postcards of New York City; *e.g.,* a grandmother in another state, a pal, a teacher. Teacher recommends giving at least one piece of information of mutual interest about the picture shown.

The students compare content, language, and tone, and show how their choices were affected by their relationships with the correspondent.

A useful alternative activity, particularly on the elementary level, would be to write postcards after a class trip. Following a visit to one of the botanic gardens, for instance, the students might send cards to a 6-year old friend and to a former science teacher.

This is an opportunity to remind students of postcard etiquette and postal requirements.

You may want to send for "All About Letters," a publication produced by the U.S. Postal Service in Cooperstown with the National Council of Teachers of English. In addition, there are several publications telling where you can get free items by writing.

Follow up with letters to pen pals, authors, entertainers, and politicians. Most public figures answer their mail, and there's no better incentive for writing the next letter than getting one.

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* Adapted from Davis, Gardner, Glass and Dunning (eds.), *Scholastic Real World English; Writing 3,* Lessen 7 (New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1978), p. 34.

3. Modes of Writing

Modes of writing are customarily divided into four types: narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive. But a "composition" uses all four types, without the artificial distinctions adopted for teaching. A typical English Regents question gives a topic, with no motivation or background beyond the title. The students have to read the list of choices; pick one that they know a bit about; make a statement of opinion; give reasons for their opinions; give a definition of terms; give facts (if any are called for or available); present a conclusion, perhaps with a story to illustrate the generalizations.

A recent Regents topic was "Not Much for Your Money." A typical and effectively organized essay begins with a narrative about going to the supermarket. A fat wallet and a nearly empty shopping car to wheel to the register. Shock! Hardship! Consternation! All that work and all that money and all the tempting advertising – the colors, the fragrances, the tastes – and again the feeling that somehow there's been a swindle. All of this forms the narrative, which is complete with description, the detail chosen to add to the mood of the story. Then the authors go into exposition: this is the problem we all face today. If there are any statistics to put in, the writers may insert them here. As specifically as they can, they document the truth and seriousness of the conflict they are discussing. Next, what has to be done is addressed; the recommendations of the authors for fixing things up. They become persuasive, mingling suggestions with a pitch for the brand of miracle snake oil they want to sell.

In one little essay, which the exam describes simply as " . . . a well organized composition of 250–300 words . . . ," students have combined story, description, explanation, and persuasion, just as they do in conversations all the time. As we all do.

For the purposes of teaching, however, there are advantages to isolating the modes and teaching the special characteristics of each separately, so that students may concentrate upon and acquire the individual skills before the eventual integration of the modes into their natural unity.

Narration or story telling may begin with the simplest two-line anecdote and eventually, through progressively more complex assignments, lead to complex personal narratives. Descriptive writing will begin with items under the direct, immediate observation of the students and move from these to the development of sympathetic settings, mood and tone for the personal narratives. Explaining things – expository writing – will advance from simple directions to complex cause-effect relationships. Persuasive writing may start with an opinion, explaining why that opinion is correct – use of facts and arguments – and culminate in a composition in which the tone and phrasing, the style, make an argument emotionally as well as logically convincing.

The procedures for developing each mode are in general the same. One may start work on each phase through such methods as gaming, dictation, modeling, directed observation and class discussion – any or all of these depending on what the class as a whole and what the separate groups can handle. Less advanced groups need more preliminary exercises; more advanced groups can skip a lot of prewriting and get directly to free writing on the first draft, possibly as a follow-up to a literature lesson. (See pp. 24-25.)

For instance, dictation can be used to provide a model for students to see and get a feel for the form before they have to use it. (Dictation is also useful as a diagnostic tool and as an aid in developing sentence sense. See p. 108 for fuller treatment.)

One variation is to read a longer, more complicated passage which students are to summarize. The students listen and then write down the gist of what they have heard. This activity offers practice in selection and reinforces a sense of arrangement in sequence, a skill which may be taught and strengthened by such devices as:

- guided questions, *e.g.,* Which kitchen tool do you need to make a grilled cheese sandwich? What does the cook have to do first?

- lists of events to be arranged in order of occurrence, size, importance, attractiveness or repulsiveness, or any categories that might catch the students' fancy.

After prewriting or warm-up activities, students may try free writing as described on p. 24. They may develop a cooperative composition in which the class works on a paragraph in the mode selected, reviews the criteria, and copies the model into their notebooks. (This last activity is especially useful when a new mode or form is introduced.)

The final stage for each mode is the one in which writers make their own content with nothing supplied to them except some motivating stimulus. Apart from that motivation, they make the whole thing up. By this time they have gone beyond reiterating what the teacher said; gone beyond paraphrasing what the teacher said; gone beyond depending upon what the teacher and others have said. Finally, they will be making up everything out of their own minds and experiences, writing what they want to say, how they want to say it, concentrating on organization, clarity, and completeness of detail. (See Chapter 4, pp. 65-86 for ways to mesh with literature.)

Once that is done, there is the stage of revision that involves choice of words, emphasis, and tone. The piece is read over so that the author and the readers are satisfied that it says, clearly and convincingly, what the author means. Dividing the class into small groups is a good way of supplying readers to give advice on what needs rewriting. (See pp. 27-28, 29, and Chapter 5, pp. 87-95 for more on grouping and revising.) Finally, in order to insure correctness, students edit and proofread their own papers. (For additional instruction on these phases, see pp. 96-103.)

Narration

Telling a story is the most basic kind of writing. "What happened next? And after that?" Narrative tends to organize itself. The order of events forces the teller to keep the facts pretty straight, to follow the series that starts with "once upon a time," and goes on as long as the teller wants with "and then . . . and then . . ." Of course, we don't expect students to write *Rain* or *The Cask of the Amontillado.* Complex narratives, with elaborate plots, hints of subplot, characterization, symbolic meanings, and artfully placed climaxes are challenges for professional writers to meet.

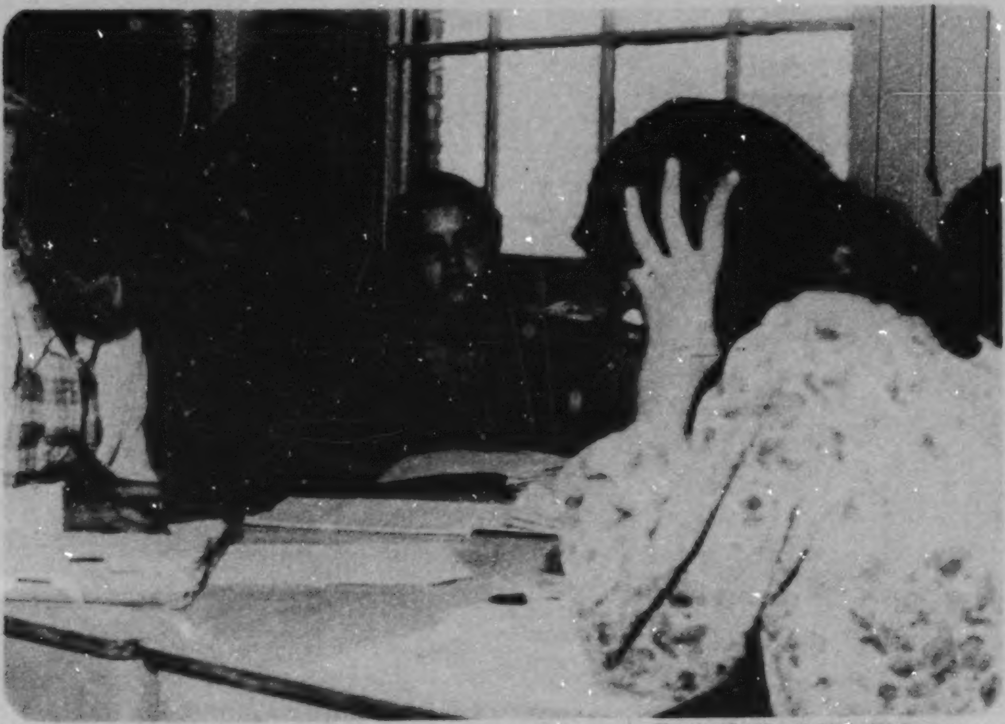

Photo by Allen Gingold, J.H.S. 13M, District 4

Start with the simplest two-line anecdote and work toward more ambitious narratives. Practical and working goals for all are:

- Writing of something of interest to the writer so that it is of interest to the reader.
- Giving as many of the 5 W's – the who, what, where, when, why, and how – as are important to the story.

Oral Activities

1. To develop some idea of structure, tell part of a story. Is it finished? No? Why not? What else has to happen? Why not? Are there any other ways that would work?

2. A slightly tougher task is to give the class a *cliff-hanger.* Build up all the suspense and tension you can; get them leaning forward; and then – stop!

   - Did Superman get out of the lead-lined coffin with the Kryptonite?

   - John saw a very old-looking mirror in the trash.
     He stepped on it and fell right through. Then ,,,

   It could be a contest to contrive the most original or outrageous or exciting ending.

3. Take a trio or a quartet of unlikely and entirely unrelated objects. The class has to think of a narrative that in some way combines them all into a single story which makes some sense. (Be fair. You can't ask for very much. That would ruin the game.)

   - a left shoe
   - an Egyptian mummy
   - a pencil sharpener
   - a McDonald's hamburger

Remember not to spend too much time on far-out fantasy type situations. Real writing is more likely to come from stories rooted in reality. As Maureen Daly, a professional writer, recalls:

> Our teacher also stressed the importance of "writing about what one knows." She realized, of course, that living in a small town and being somewhat underage, our class was not likely to come up with extraordinary, fascinating adventures out of our own lives. What she did do, however, was to make us work on ourselves, analyzing our emotions and friends and the events that were important to our lives. And she trained us to try to look honestly, even when it might prove painful, in discovering ourselves. We found drama everywhere.*

4. Ask volunteers to tell about an experience; a trip; an anecdote concerning school; family; friends; or a neighborhood event. The audience listens and asks them questions about what they think they want to hear more about. This practice concentrates attention on logical sequence, giving sufficient detail, and presenting the ideas clearly.

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* From Maureen Daly, *Sixteen and Other Stories* (New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1972), the preface.

Role Playing

Role playing often serves as an effective warm-up activity for composing a narrative. Give students familiar situations and ask them to volunteer to role play the scene. Students draw on their own experiences, real or vicarious, to set the scene, establish character, and bring the simple plot to a climax and resolution. They are called on to reveal (not merely tell about) what happened and how they felt.

- You return home very late from a party only to find your father/mother waiting for you – very angry.
- You apply for an after-school job for which you are not qualified.
- You are the new kid on the block and you want to be invited to join the game.
- You have to tell your date you can't go out tonight.
- You finish your lunch at a counter – and discover your wallet is missing.
- You are stuck in a stalled elevator with a teacher whose class you have been cutting all week.
- You're tired. You've been out late. You come home and find that you have lost your key. You look in your pockets, each one in turn: empty! There are voices coming from inside your home – strange voices. You ring the bell and nobody answers.
- You go into your little sister's room. She is crying when you enter; but when she sees you she stops crying and starts to scream, "I hate you! I hate you!" What might be going on? What would you do? What would you say?
- You are in a doorway waiting for a bus; you hear two people just out of sight talking. Not meaning to listen, you pay no attention until you hear your name. Then you realize that one of the speakers is your best friend, and he/she is laughing about you. (Show how you feel.)

These prewriting activities can be a great deal of fun and so you must make sure that they last only long enough to build up excitement but are stopped soon enough to get writing started.

FOLLOW-UP TO ROLE PLAYING

1. Ask students to tell an anecdote similar to one of the scenes role played or to a situation they are reminded of.

2. Ask students to *write* an account of one of the scenes enacted or of an anecdote it brings to mind. This may provide an opportunity to review the conventions for writing dialogue. The group can work together to develop an opening line:

   - I knew I wouldn't get away with it when I walked in late from the party . . .

   - The day we moved in, I watched from the steps while kids down the block played a game of . . .

   - "Oh no," I said as I dug into my pocket and discovered a hole instead of my money . . .

3. Other situations about which the student can write include:

   - getting lost on the train
   - accepting a second-choice date and then being asked by a first-choice
   - being told at the last minute that *you* are a second choice, and the first has come through
   - having to bring home a disappointing report card.

4. Ask the class to tell what happened to them as it happened; why it happened; and how the worst of it could have been avoided.

Writing Activities

1. If your class is stuck at the stage of writing pieces that begin with "Nothing happened this morning" and end with "Another boring day!", you may want students to try some of these writing activities:

    - Tell the story of a party, including the people who were there, the order in which they came, who came with whom, who said what when, who left when and in which combinations.

    - Send someone out with a pass to go to a place in the school and come back ready to tell every single thing or person he or she saw, heard, encountered on the way.

    - Choose a couple of students who work well together; have them stage a quarrel and then ask the class what happened.

2. You can use these activities to help students realize that things are always happening in their external worlds. Then work on structure, style, arrangement of details, elaboration and whatever you like to get into next.

Once the students are able to write about these externals which aren't terribly private or threatening, they can begin to write about the internal worlds of their inner lives, their dreams and imaginings, where no morning is ever dull and no day is ever boring.

As the chart on page 2 indicates, experience is more than just what happened externally: the goal is to go beyond these externals to one's perception of that experience, one's feelings, hopes, associations, intuitions and introspection.

Encourage students to use journal entries* which deal with their feelings about home, friends, school as subjects for expanded narratives which emphasize their inner lives. Compositions should gradually grow longer and include more detail. However, length is not as important as saying things which contain qualities such as candor, honesty, imagination, observation, and control.

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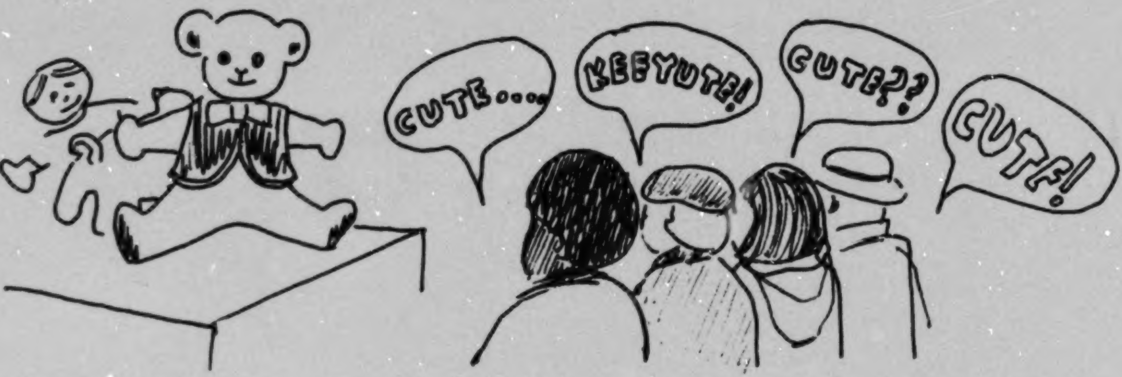
* Refer to pp. 15-16.

Description

The shoppers walking through a store want to buy a present for somebody. They know the type of thing they want. But which one?

"That one's cute." **Casual**
"Yeah. Cute." **Mild agreement**
"Aw, here's a cute one." **Enthusiasm**
"Cute? Mmm – cute." **Disparagement**
"Here. This is *cute.*" **Excitement and conviction**
"Hey, yeah. That's *really* cute." **Complete endorsement**


CUTE....
KEEYUTE!
CUTE??
CUTE!

Now "cute" doesn't mean much, if anything. All the meanings were in the tones of voice, in the glances and gestures. Any writer who could put that on a page could make television redundant. But you can't do it, not even in prose written with full musical notation. So instead you need to use careful and detailed observation, precise details selected from all the details you *could* mention to produce an impression of what is being described.

No writing is a photocopy of reality: it's a translation from one mode of existence into another, from reality into symbol; and the symbols then have to be put together so artfully that, when an ideal reader absorbs them, they will retranslate into reality *plus* the point of view of the writer.*

Descriptive writing is simpler than the other modes in some ways and much more difficult in others. The thing you're describing is there – or it was – and it's based on direct observation. But where does the thing begin? What comes first? What's the most important feature? What's the precise word for this not-quite-red-but-not-really-pink sunset color reflected in the puddle? Which of the many things to be noticed and written about are important enough to mention? Which are secondary? What's the best tone for a description of a kindly old person? For the same person angry and not so kindly? And with adjectives, as with spice, how much is perfect for flavoring and how much is excess that destroys the taste? What comparisons will make the person or thing more vivid? And how does the description change when you are describing someone to a potential blind date instead of to the police?

***See pp. 11-12 for activities in the use of similes and metaphors.**

Observation

"We all see," as Holmes told Watson, "but we do not observe." (See p. 69 for alternate activity on observation.) The start of descriptive writing is observation. And at the start it is direct, simple, guided observation of something we've all seen so often that it has become a cliche symbol of familiarity. Of course, it's not so well known as we imagine. This activity will prove that.

There is an old saying about a familiar place that "I know it like the back of my hand." But how well do you know the back of your own hand? You have seen it often enough, but do you know it? Let's see.

Don't look yet. Don't count. Put your left hand behind your back. (If you are a left-handed person, put your right hand behind your back.) Just see whether you can answer the questions without looking. Write the answers in your notebook.

Which is your longest finger?
Which is your *second* longest finger?
Which parts of your hand have the most hair growing on them?
Where is the skin smoothest?
Where is the skin most wrinkled?

Were you able to answer all the questions accurately? If you couldn't – and most people couldn't – you have just learned how much less we observe than we think we do.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Now let's try a little test. What did you use to write your answers with? A pen? A pencil? If you lost it and someone else picked it up, could you describe it so well that you could prove it was yours? What are the features of a pen or pencil that you might include in a complete description?

   In your notebook, list all the things you can observe about the pen or pencil. You should list such things as size, color, shape, weight, brand name, identifying peculiarities (scars, breaks, gouges) and include material, texture, and any other special features (*e.g.,* ink that smears).

   Exchange writing instruments with another member of the group and write a description of that person's pen or pencil. When you're both done, return the pens or pencils to their original owners and compare your description with your partner's.

   - Is there anything included in one description that is not in the other?

   - What has been left out of the two descriptions that you now both see should be included?

Remember the point of this lesson: Before you write about something, make sure you have taken a good look at it and have seen everything you can see.

2. There is another activity that might require some unexpectedly careful looking at things. For this one, we will divide the class into groups of four or five.* We need a box of "stuff." It can't be a box of identifiable things – not even recognizable parts of things. To do this correctly, we need just "gizmos," such as:

- parts of the insides of appliances
- broken-off protruberances from machines that haven't done anything for years
- metal objects carefully machined to a shape that seems unfamiliar, unprecedented, and purposeless
- part of a picture, torn off, showing an intricate connection between pipes, belts, gears
- the squared-off threaded rod that fits inside a doorknob and operates a lock
- the inside of an old electric socket

The point is that nobody in the class should be able to say, "This is a double-cut, brass-and-chrome, Number 17 widget." Whatever anyone picks up, despite its physical appearance, is not anything nameable. James Thurber said the Golux looked . . ."very much like nothing anybody has ever seen before." These objects should be like the Golux.

- Each group gets a selection of stuff that includes as many things as there are group members, plus one extra. The students first discuss what there is to say about something that isn't part of any recognizable genus or species.
- Having agreed on the physical possibilities, they each take one and write a timed description. How much time depends on the class and on the complexity of their subjects.
- The objects are put back, and each student takes a new one and writes another timed description.
- Each group member writes two descriptions and selects the better one to put in a central pile. The leader reshuffles the papers, gives each person someone else's paper, and puts all the objects on a desk in the center of the group.
- Movable furniture makes grouping easier, especially at times like these, but if the desks are fastened down, the students aren't. They get close to things, try to find which item matches which description and then return the "gizmo" and its description to the successful writer.

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* See pp. 27-28 for discussion of grouping techniques.

You can either join one group or move from one group to another; both methods have value. If the teacher keeps in touch with each group, there will be the assurance that all the students are receiving some personal attention – very important to any writer. If the teacher joins a group, he/she might also write a piece for the class to share.

3. What is good in the first descriptions will be the factual detail. But too much of just-the-facts can be boring, however well it may be done. Associations, after all, are what make things interesting and valuable, lending them the animation that makes them become part of us instead of remaining chunks of the vast, neutral, overwhelming world. Now try for a more associative, humanizing description.

This time we're going to try to describe an object but go beyond its surface appearance, to find out something about the way people think of it.

A. When you buy a new pair of shoes, your shoes are like all the others of that style. Only the sizes vary; otherwise new shoes of the same style look pretty much like each other. Once the shoes have been worn for a while, they begin to look like yours. Each of us walks in a special way, and our shoes are worn in a way that matches the way we walk.

Examine a pair of shoes and list your observations in a notebook: size, shape, color, texture, markings – everything. Are they scuffed at the toes? Are the heels worn down? Is one heel more worn than the other? Are they well-polished? Do you think the person who has worn them steps heavily or lightly? Is he or she slight or heavy? Is he or she frivolous or serious minded? Let your imagination go. Is there any clue as to the person's hobbies or activities. People's shoes, like most of their belongings, in some way show the footprints of the people who own and use them. Now write your description.

B. When your desk was brand new, the top was completely smooth and unmarked. If it's like most school desks, it isn't new any more and it has marks on it. It may even have writing that you can read. Study the top of your desk. List everything you can observe about it in your notebook: size, shape, color, texture, markings – everything. Then write your description.

When you're sure that you have mentioned everything important about the desk, it's time to look again – and start asking the next set of questions. How has it been treated? What kinds of marks are on it? If it is written on, what kinds of things do the writing say? What have you learned about the students who sat there over the years? How did the worn desk make you feel?

Go back to your original description (A or B) and add to it so that the reader can see and feel about the object the way you do.

4. In real life, the way you describe something differs with the reason for describing it.

   Write a notice or sign about your lost dog or cat to post in the lobby of your building or on the bulletin board in the local supermarket.

   Write a message, notice or flyer about the same pet needing a new home because you are moving where pets aren't allowed.

(See pp. 10-12, 18-19, 20-21, 22-23, 69-77 for more lessons in descriptive writing.)

(For student samples, see pp. 158, 162, 174-175.)

Exposition

Expository writing relays information and involves explaining. Expository writing ranges from a simple definition to a complex analysis. Giving simple directions, explaining how to do or make something, presenting a report – these too are all examples of expository writing.

The organization of an exposition can be spatial, as in giving directions, or chronological, as in explaining how to do or make something. An explanation of ideas or attitudes follows the logical sequence – from most important to least important or vice versa, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, statement plus example – and progresses from detail to generalization or from generalization to detail.

Prewriting Activities

Try some fun activities involving explaining something to one or more persons.

1. Select a passage of directions and dictate it to the class. Ask that all students write down exactly what they hear. You can use any source of appeal to the students – a recipe, a driver's manual, instructions for assembling a toy.

   The idea of this exercise is to be exact, and being exact requires that the students get every little detail right. It's like the headbone-neckbone-shoulderbone connection: a person would look pretty silly with only two-thirds of the parts. In the same way, an explanation that leaves out an important part will sound strange and may even be seriously wrong. "Warm up a can of beans." That's easy. But if the person reading doesn't remember to open up the can and put the beans in a pot, what you have is hot beans that you can't use, because they're in a can that's too hot to open, or have exploded on the wall. Details make a difference.

2. Bring in a colorful tie. Ask one student to come to the front of the room, and another to do the explaining. The student in front does what is ordered. The one who explains has to say exactly what to do: "Make the left side twice as long as the right," instead of "Take one – not that one, the other one . . . good." Without trying to be obstructive, the demonstrator has to be completely literal and devoid of initiative or previous knowledge. This "necktie party" can be done with the whole group.

3. The same activity can be done with extra-long shoelaces and the class split into groups. The object is to tie the bow in a shoelace, neither giving nor accepting any but the most precise instructions.

Writing Activities

The students will arrive at the realization that, in order for directions to be followed, they must be clear, sequential, and complete.

1. Have a student volunteer demonstrate one of the following activites to the whole class.

   - Construct a paper airplane
   - Demonstrate chewing gum and blowing bubbles
   - Take a piece of string and make a cat's cradle
   - Demonstrate the steps to a dance

   The students watch the process and, in small groups, figure out the steps, write them down, and then test them by exchanging with another group. If the other group cannot follow the directions, they are a flop.

   Each group selects one of the other activities to demonstrate. Each member writes directions. Each group selects the best set of directions and tests it by exchanging with another group.

   This might be a good place to teach parallel structure and the other conventions of transition (transition words, repetition of key words, use of pronouns).

2. Doing this assignment requires careful thinking about what we normally take for granted: observation, clarity, and coherence. There are hundreds of things we know without fully knowing them.

   Every student goes to and from class every day: ask the students to write instructions for getting from their seats in class to their front doors, including every landmark necessary to a Martian who can read but can't ask anybody for directions.

   The instructions can be read over in the groups, with each reader looking to find places where a stranger following these directions could possibly go wrong; and they can be reread, rechecked, and rewritten until they are completely foolproof.

3. One common type of writing assignment is, "How I Feel About . . " A way to get at that feeling, and to find the words for it, is to assign a choice of evocative or provocative topics, either single words or very brief phrases: beards, salami, growing old, love, loveliness, high heels, telephones, hay fever , babies, and so on.

Ask the students to pick from the assigned topics one that turns them on right away; or to put down another topic that pops into their heads, in three seconds – no more. Stop them after three seconds.

Then ask the class to think about their choices and, for three to five minutes, write down whatever they think of as fast as they can. Even if it's silly. Even if it's the same thing over and over until another idea comes along, or until the time is up. (See Free Writing, pp. 24-25.)

Have the students read what they have written and sort out all the words that go together into related groups.

Do it yourself as the class does; then work with yours on the board. (Of course you might want to cheat on this, to be sure you have a good demonstration model.)

Suppose the topic is "potatoes" and you make a list such as is shown in Figure 1. You could look over your list and combine **greasy, starchy, french-fried, fattening** and **home-fried.** This choice would lead you to think potatoes are delicious to eat, but very unhealthy. Then again, you might take **white, good, baked, peel, chives, salad,** and **boiled** out of the list and conclude that potatoes are healthy and versatile. You might compare the two lists and conclude that a person could have mixed feelings about potatoes. "Even though they are sometimes greasy and fattening, I like to eat them."

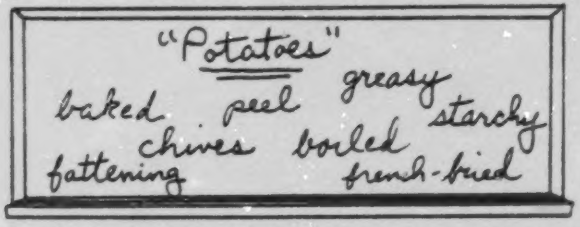

Figure 1

For each of these opposing feelings, there can be a "because" -- with the subsidiary reasons and some description. You may also reach a conclusion in your attitudes toward the simple brown potato. "In the future, I will probably compromise and eat french-fried potatoes because they are such a tasty, attractive sin."

An equally marked but much more serious set of conflicts will appear with topics like school, father, mother, race, rules, running away. It's good to get the students to see that it's possible (and all right) to feel more than one way about something important.

Later, in small group and private conferences, you'll have to show how to select ideas in a way that will eliminate unmanageable loose ends, irreconcilable conflicts, and red herrings.

4. This is a hard one because it will involve narrative first, then exposition; or simultaneous narrative and exposition. It may call up ideas and feelings that are hard to confront, almost impossible in a group, and very hard in private. It's a serious risk, opening up the way to such very personal writing; but you can't avoid it. All that a prudent teacher can do is try not to summon up very big demons, and to run for help if a monster shows horns, scales, or hoofs.

    For a start: Did you ever do anything that just didn't make sense? That you knew you shouldn't do? Something harmful? Boring? Dangerous? Useless? Spiteful? Something you had done before, didn't like, and still did again? Something that made you think, "I can't believe I really did that!"?

    What happened? (Narrative)

    Now that it's over, try the feelings list again.

    Why do you think you did what you did? (Explaining)

    Of course, it is in the *what* and *why* that demons can appear; self-destructive acts or wishes, secret fears, terrible embarrassments, unconventional acts. (You might want to set boundaries at the start.)

    A source that can be quarried repeatedly for more riches than surface streaks is the daily journal (see pp. 15, 16, 54). Often rereading a journal will reveal preoccupations, feelings, and attitudes which the writer might like to try to analyze and explain.

5. Report writing doesn't have to be dull. This offbeat activity* combines fact finding, classification, and organization. It provides an open-ended learning situation which calls for logic, creativity, and problem-solving. The writing follow-up can be both challenging and enjoyable.

    Prepare a set of boxes, bags, or envelopes, each containing at least six unrelated articles, such as:

    - a scrap of newspaper with a photo, a story, or an ad
    - a safety pin
    - a dog biscuit
    - a coin
    - a balloon
    - a clip
    - chalk
    - a key
    - a seashell
    - a baseball
    - a trading card
    - a packet of sugar
    - a corn plaster
    - a broken pencil
    - a bottle cap
    - and the like

* Developed from an activity presented by Sheila Schlawin and Charles Chew of the State Education Department, Bureau of English.

Divide the class into as many groups as you have boxes. Prepare index cards of directions to accompany each box.

A

The items from this box were removed from an archaeological dig in the year 2980 on a site which had been leveled. Select a recorder and prepare a group oral report including the information [illegible] back

(front)

B

- *What* was found?
- *How* are the items related to one another?
- *Who* do you think could have used them? How?
- *Where* were they found?
- *When* were they found?

(back)

The other class members will act as reporters for the local newspaper, taking down notes of the significant facts (the 5 W's and the how) and asking questions of the "authorities" on anything that is not clear. This is followed by each reporter writing his/her own news story.

In all of these expository writing activities, you will be building skills which include:

- thinking logically
- maintaining a sound sequence
- classifying
- relating ideas
- achieving completeness
- assigning proper emphasis

With some of the subjects, students may be required to establish bases for their opinions by citing facts or authority. As in all writing, precision of language is a necessity; in expository writing in particular, conciseness is a virtue.

Persuasion

To be able to persuade someone about something, you must know and care about the subject. Most school persuasive writing is weak and unconvincing because the knowing or the caring – or both – is missing.

The teacher's first job is to help the student unearth those areas which are of genuine concern and then to broaden the student's world so that there are additional concerns.

And always it is necessary to make sure that in addition to concern there is also a reservoir of facts and knowledge to enable the student to back up his/her feelings with logical arguments. Then – and only then – can there be a concentration on the "techniques" of writing a good persuasive piece.

Reading and talking are pluses before most kinds of writing, but particularly before persuasive writing. You need to think about and talk about an issue. You need to know whether you are convincing anybody – and to decide whom in particular you want to convince.

What makes persuasive writing harder than simple explaining is the increased scope of its goal. It isn't persuasive to say, "Give me this because I want it." Nor is it persuasion just to say "I want it because . . . . .," whatever the because is. "If I can't have my freedom I don't want to live" is dramatic but not memorable. Patrick Henry's line was memorable in seven words: *"Give me liberty or give me death!";* the paraphrase is forgettable in eleven. So because persuasive writing needs the clarity of good exposition as well as the rhetorical vigor required to influence a reader, it is more difficult than expository writing. And because ideas have to be organized in an order that is most effective, which takes a good deal of judgment, it's much more difficult than narrative writing.

Students have to be led to write persuasive work for realistic situations. There are quite a few such occasions in real life. In fact, one is more often required to be persuasive on paper than to narrate or explain.

Most people write when they have to. And when you *have* to do something it's usually because you're dealing with a person or organization that has the power to do what you want (or to do what you don't want) and thus has to be persuaded.

Any student might very well have to write real persuasive pieces such as the following:

- letters to a guidance counselor
- a request for a refund
- a form requesting permission
- a job application
- a request for consideration or reconsideration of a grade
- an ad for a student publication or product
- an absence note

In addition, pieces that may be good therapy and good politics can air concerns in such areas as the draft and the Equal Rights Amendment.

Preliminary Activities

One way to teach students to base their persuasive pieces on facts is to have preliminary activiites in which facts are supplied.

1. Once a week, ask the students to clip out an article of interest from the newspaper for their journal entries. Each student summarizes the information given (who, what, where, when, why), and expresses an opinion, telling why he/she feels that way.

   This activity can add spice to the daily journal writing, supply raw material, get the student into the habit of expressing an opinion and serve as preparation for more lengthy opinion pieces.

   This is one journal entry that students usually like to share, but as with other journal entries, sharing is entirely up to the student.

2. Reproduce a newspaper article in which two sides of a story are given, such as the following adaptation of a newspaper account (see p. 58) of an incident between a policeman and a college student.*

   Distribute copies to the students to read, and then divide the class into two groups, each of which will role play one of the characters involved in the controversy. *No statement may be made that is not based on facts in the article.*

   The teacher keeps the ball rolling by calling first on "the policeman" and then on "the student" with provocative questions and comments such as:

   To the policeman:
   What did you actually see? What made you think he was a thief?

   To the student:
   Why did you run?

   When the argument has boiled over and is simmering down, it's time to switch sides. Those who were "the policeman" now become "the student" and vice-versa – and they now present the case for the other side.

---

* Adapted from a WEDGE workshop conducted by Lee Odell of SUNY, Albany.

THE POLICEMAN'S STORY

He was running down the platform pushing people out of the way. His jacket looked lumpy, as though he was hiding something in it. At the other end of the platform an old woman was shouting, "He stole my purse! He stole my purse! Help!"

I called to him to stop, but he just kept running. He pushed past a woman and she dropped her package. He kept running and I kept chasing after him, calling "Stop, stop!" He would have gotten away if the doors of the train hadn't closed just as he got there. I asked him why he was running and he gave me an angry, threatening look and didn't answer.

THE STUDENT'S STORY

The policeman ran up to me and spoke to me angrily. I didn't answer him because the noise made by the train pulling away prevented me from hearing him. I didn't understand why he looked so angry but the expression on his face scared me.

THE POLICEMAN CONTINUES

He looked like he was going to run away again. It seemed he had something hidden under his jacket. I told him to lift his arms to see if he had the purse.

He began to shout, "Help me! Help me!" and threw himself on the ground. Just then my partner arrived. I grabbed one arm and my partner grabbed the other arm. He kept screaming and wouldn't get up. A crowd gathered. Someone started taking pictures. Voices around me shouted that he had stolen the old lady's purse.

THE STUDENT CONTINUES

When he asked me why I hadn't stopped running, I was scared and angry. There was so much noise made by the train and I was concentrating on catching it. He asked me to lift my arms and I didn't know why. I didn't lift my arms and he hit me and threw me to the ground. I begged him to stop hitting me. I was afraid to get up because I thought he would hit me again. People were yelling that I stole a purse. I was so scared and hurt that I couldn't speak.

ADDITIONAL FACTS

- On October 10th, the student accused Officer Smith of false arrest.
- On October 15th, Officer Smith was charged with false arrest and brought up on departmental charges.
- The student is an honor student.
- The student is slightly hard of hearing.
- The subway station where the incident took place has a high incidence of crime.
- The policeman has a very good record. He has made many arrests which led to convictions. He has never been accused of police brutality. He is well liked by the people on the beat.
- The lady who yelled that her purse was stolen disappeared.
- The bulge in the student's pocket proved to be books. He later said that he had put them in his coat to protect them. It had been raining outside.
- A purse was found on the subway platform — not far from where the encounter took place.
- When the police later contacted the old lady she failed to identify the student as the thief. She didn't see who had taken her purse.

WRITING FOLLOW-UPS

1. As a follow-up lesson, the students alone or in groups write a letter to the editor or an editorial defending one or the other of the protagonists. Themes might range from "Police Brutality" to "A Policeman Doing His Job."

2. Other experiences basing an opinion on fact may be drawn from literature. Students can role play a controversial incident between two characters in a novel such as *The Scarlet Letter, Silas Marner, The Oxbow Incident,* or *Tom Sawyer.* This can be the preparation for writing a persuasive piece presenting a particular point of view.
3. On a younger level – or as a fun activity for older students – *Cinderella, The Three Bears,* and other fairy tales lend themselves to similar treatment.

WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. You can involve the whole class in writing an editorial or a letter to the editor on the same news item.

   Distribute copies of a dramatic human interest story, such as the example of the 91 year old woman who spent a night in jail for shoplifting $15.00 worth of food from a local supermarket (see p. 60).

   Have the students read the story. Then ask them to use the free writing technique and briefly tell what happened, give a reaction to what happened, and perhaps suggest a solution.

   Allow at least ten minutes before stopping the writing. Give another few minutes so that each writer can read over his/her own piece. Then share your own writing and/or call for volunteers to read theirs.

   Class discussion follows the free writing, guided in part by the following concerns:

   - Were the facts given accurate and complete enough so that the reader understands what happened?
   - Was there a clear indication of where the writer stands?
   - Did the writer give substantial and logical reasons for his/her stand?
   - Did the writer deal with any opposing point of view?
   - Was a feasible solution suggested?
   - Were you influenced?

   Breaking the class into small groups will allow every student to get a reaction and allow for greater participation in the discussion.

2. The content then should be shaped into an editorial or a letter to the editor. Unlike the letter, the editorial avoids the first person (I think, I feel, etc.), but both editorial and letter to the editor can use language and tone, as well as fact, as weapons to sway the reader, and facts can be woven into the body of the editorial rather than presented first.

Shoplifter, 91, Receives Food, Gifts and Sympathy

SAN ANTONIO, July 29 (UPI) – An outpouring of sympathy for Mattie Schultz, who said she wanted God to "close her eyes" because her plight had forced her to shoplift $15 worth of food to keep from starving, has improved the 91-year-old woman's outlook on life, a minister said today.

Stan Ferrar, pastor of the First Church of God, said he spoke with Mrs. Schultz yesterday and she appeared to be in a better frame of mind.

"She's beginning to get over being so depressed," Mr. Ferrar said today. "I think it is because of all the help."

Mrs. Schultz had said she wanted to die – to have God "close my eyes" – after she was arrested and jailed overnight last week on charges of stealing $15 worth of ham, sausage and butter from a grocery. Reports in the news media of her arrest resulted in contributions of food, money and sympathy from across the nation.

"She's received calls from all over the United States, even up to Canada," said Mr. Ferrar, who helped the widow answer phone calls at her home.

She was hospitalized late Friday after she complained of severe stomach pain, but officials refused to disclose her whereabouts, saying she was exhausted and needed a rest from the publicity; She was believed to be in fair condition today at Baptist Memorial Hospital, but hospital spokesmen declined to release any information.

"She has some stomach problems – and some heart problems," Mr. Ferrar said. "But I haven't talked to the doctor personally so I don't know if there is anything else."

Mrs. Schultz lost all but $10 of her $4,900 life savings to a swindler in October 1978. After that, her income was limited to Social Security and her late husband's veteran benefits, but she often rejected welfare. State officials said she refused an offer last fall to be boarded at a nursing home and had rejected offers of aid.

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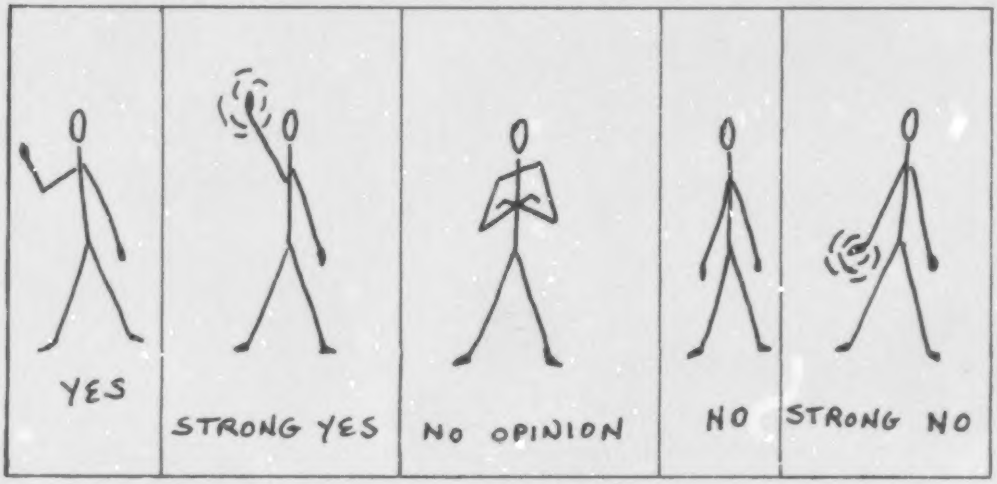
3. You want to start some real controversy going. One of the ways of doing it is to poll the class on various current topics until you find an issue that polarizes the students. More fun than an ordinary poll is this activity borrowed from the values clarification discipline.*

Arrange the class in a circle around the room so that everyone can see everyone else. Tell the class that you are going to make some statements and that everyone will have an opportunity to respond to the statements, in this way:



- If you strongly agree with the statement, raise your right arm in the air and rotate your wrist.
- If you agree with the statement, raise your right hand level with your shoulder.
- If you disagree with the statement, drop your right arm to your side.
- If you strongly disagree with the statement, drop your right arm and rotate your wrist.
- If you have no opinion or feel so-so about the statement, fold your arms on your chest.

For a practice round, have the students show what arm motions are for strong agreement, agreement, no opinion, disagreement, strong disagreement.

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* Introduced to WEDGE by Sheila Schlawin, State Education Department, Bureau of English Education.

Make the statements such as those which follow, and observe which issues generate controversy.

- Students should grade teachers.
- Women should register for the draft.
- If you find some money, you are entitled to keep it.
- Non-smokers have rights.
- Smoking is a personal decision even if it is hazardous to health.
- Kids should go to school in the summer.
- People who break the law by carrying loud radios in public places deserve to have them confiscated.
- Teachers should give homework. Homework has a purpose.
- Parents should have the right to select a child's TV programs.

From those areas in which there are strong differences of opinion, select one and ask the students to free-write (see p. 24), , giving their point of view and their reasons.

After ten minutes of writing, the teacher or a volunteer shares his/her writing with the class and gets suggestions for improvement based on the following:

- Summarize the opinion.
- What are the arguments? Are they appropriate? Logical? Convincing?
- What is the evidence (examples, statements, anecdotes)?
- What other information or evidence is needed to convince?

The class then breaks up into small groups and follows the round-robin technique described on pp. 26-27. Grouping provides an opportunity for the writer to become aware of the gaps in his/her information about a subject, and sometimes the discussion itself is informative.

Other Writing Activities

1. The teacher, being a mean sort, plans to punish you: a bad mark and a letter/phone call home because you haven't brought in any homework for the past week and a half. But if you can come up with a good reason not to do these things any more, the "prosecution" will be dropped. Try to write a reason that will be convincing to the rest of the group, who will be reading from the teacher's point of view.

2. Write a letter to your guidance counselor explaining why you want to drop the course you like least and add one you would like better. These have to be good reasons, and reasons have to be organized convincingly.

3. You are applying for admission to a college of your choice (for high school students), or to a specialized high school (for intermediate students). In applying, you have to explain why you are the right person for the place you have selected.

4. Every school, no matter how good it is, has something that could be better. Students, having a good opportunity to see what's wrong, don't get enough chance to say what they think about it. Write a letter to the principal, a department head, the editor of the school paper, advocating a change you recommend and giving good logical reasons for the reader to agree with you.

Limiting the students to recommending things to *do*, rather than simply choosing good causes to be for and bad things to be against, will lead them to concentrate far more effectively. It will also help them to decide what they want to write about and to evaluate whether they have written it.

Move from school and family to concern for community and even to national affairs, on which students may express opinion in the form of a letter to a newspaper or to an elected official.

> Remember that while you may teach the various modes in isolation, in order to give students opportunities to practice with manageable segments, most writing does involve more than one mode.
>
> All these disparate modes should be combined, as they must always be in any seriously intentioned piece of writing, no matter how unsophisticated or how polished its author may be.

4. Meshing Writing with Literature

Although teachers often protest that it is difficult to get "all that required literature read and still provide many opportunities for writing," the meshing of the reading of literature and the writing of compositions presents no insurmountable difficulties. Careful advance planning is necessary.

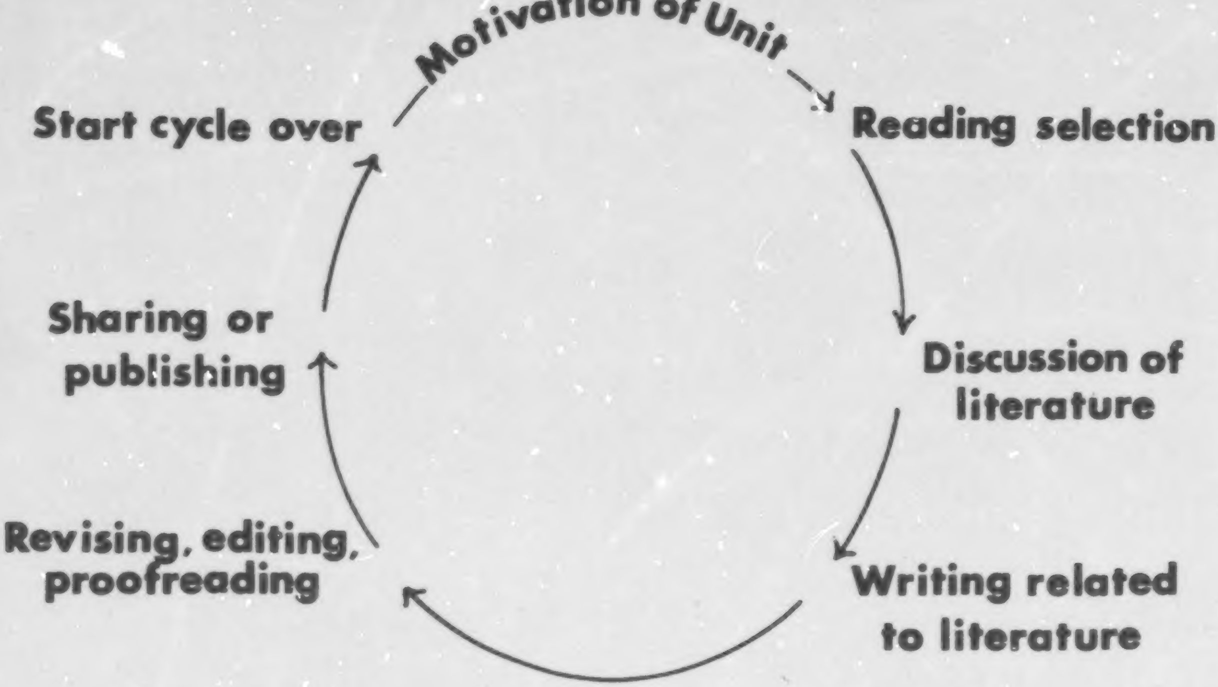
If the language arts course of study is viewed as a cycle or a chain, the language arts strands of reading, literature, language, writing and speaking fall into place readily.

Planning begins with the selection of a unit comprising an overall theme, topic, or core of literature. The unit may take a period of time ranging anywhere from a day, a week, a month, to a term to complete.

This unit of work is introduced or motivated by some discussion, then followed by reading the selected piece of literature or portion of the literary work. This reading in turn is followed by more discussion. The students will write; then revise or rewrite, edit, and proofread. The finished work is shared with other students. Sometimes work is posted or included in class "magazines" or scrapbooks. Letters should be mailed or exchanged. The best work should find a wider audience in school publications and contests.

The cycle or chain is thus completed. It starts all over again with a new piece of literature or with succeeding portions of the novel, play or biography being studied.

There are three main aspects of a work of literature, to put it somewhat arbitrarily, which must be considered in order to do justice to the work. The first and most obvious level is gaining an understanding of what the book is about: who the characters are, the plot, the theme, the setting, and all the non-literary content—historical background, mores of the period, any scientific data, sociological background, information of all kinds.


Motivation of Unit
Reading selection
Discussion of literature
Writing related to literature
Revising, editing, proofreading
Sharing or publishing
Start cycle over

The next level is understanding the humanistic aspects of the book—the ideas, ideals, values and standards expressed by the author; and responding to ideas and values as they may reveal, expand, reinforce, or contradict those of the reader.

The last, and perhaps the most subtle level, is an awareness of the literary techniques the author uses—tools of style, form, and language, and the devices and figures of speech—all of which make the piece of literature effective. All three aspects should be introduced to students although the extent to which the class deals with the third will depend upon the maturity of the pupils.

Writing activities can be planned to mesh with the study of all three aspects of literature. For convenience let's match writing activities to this tripartite study of literature:

- Writing about the literature: giving factual information, summarizing, analyzing, giving opinions, ranging from one or two sentences to a research paper based on literature
- Using literature as a *springboard:* reacting to the literature by interpreting it in the light of one's own experiences; responding to the author's ideas and feelings by offering one's own in agreement or disagreement; responding by recreating one's own experiences.
- Using the literature as a stylistic model for emulation: analyzing the literature in terms of the modes of narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive writing; imitating the author's style with new content

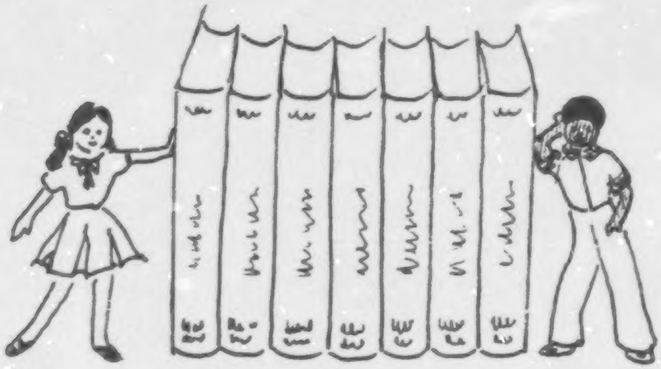
Writing about Literature

Opportunities to write *about* literature can occur frequently, even daily, in many different forms. The most obvious is by writing short answers to questions about the reading which may be assigned as homework or as a "do-now" at the beginning of the class.

The most frequent writing assignment is the short-answer quiz designed to reveal whether students are reading the assigned work—or, more important, whether they understand the literature they're reading.

A convenient exercise is the five-question quiz requiring brief statements in reply. A handy formula for the model quiz is:

1. one question everyone can answer
2. three questions requiring simple knowledge of the material, answerable by all who've read and understood the assignment
3. one question that is more challenging and demanding, going beyond simple factual response



Other writing activities may be brief "do-nows", put on the board at the beginning of the period and randomly checked. These questions might focus on the most important idea in the reading, reactions to a character or situation, or a one-sentence summary.

More detailed writing activities include papers of one or more paragraphs following the format of the questions of the Regents or Citywide examinations. Pupils write, in essay form, responses to questions about plot, character, situation, theme, or setting, which require them to analyze what they've read, compare, contrast, and cite instances to prove their points.

The omnipresent book report is another opportunity to write about literature. The range is broad. The simplest report may be a brief opinion on a 3 x 5 index card, which the teacher can keep in a file on the desk. The card may recommend or disparage the book, with a sentence summarizing the subject and two or three sentences of personal opinion. This file may be useful for the entire class as a guide in selecting books. The best cards may be given to the library for a permanent resource file for the school.

More extensive reports may be in the form of book jackets to provide outlets for the artistic, book reviews, or critiques.

Mature students may write longer papers of analysis and interpretation dealing with several works by an author they enjoy, or they may compare and contrast works of different authors.

Responding to Literature

After the teacher is confident that the class understands what the author has said, he or she will encourage the students to discuss and later to write paragraphs or longer papers in which they respond to the book. Inspired by their reading, they will express feelings they share, ideas which have been reinforced or contradicted, instances of new understanding of their own emotions and behavior and of those of others in their lives*

Some of the subjects which may elicit responses from the students are:

- emotional reactions to people and circumstances
- how one overcomes obstacles and hardships
- the difficulties and importance of standing up for one's beliefs
- the effects of one's environment
- acceptable or non-acceptable ways of behaving
- differences and similarities among people
- the effects of breaking or maintaining traditions
- the individual conflicts and interactions with society
- ideals of good citizenship
- social pressures

Other opportunities to mesh literature and writing will come as students direct their attention to the author's style and feelings.

Using Literature as a Model

One of the most effective ways to improve student writing is by modelling, a device popular in Great Britian but perhaps under-utilized here.

Modelling starts with an analysis of a passage by a professional writer. The excerpt can be from the book being studied in class or from an outside source selected by the teacher or students. The author's technique is studied carefully.

Students then write in imitation of the author's technique, transposing the passage to some incident or observation in the student's own experience.

Teachers may find descriptive writing the easiest mode in which to start the practice of modelling. It is simpler than narrative writing because one can limit the range of the subject more easily than with narrative.

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* More extensive suggestions may be found in the curriculum bulletin *Handbook for the English Language Arts, Grades 5-12, Reading and Literature,* Board of Education of the City of New York, 1967-68 Series, No. 10.

Descriptive Writing

A sequence of lessons in description may start with a motivating lesson or activity designed to emphasize the importance of careful observation in descriptive writing–indeed in all writing.

The teacher starts with a short quiz asking students to respond to questions about common or well-known places or people around the school; for example:

1. What famous picture hangs on the wall outside the general office?
2. Does the principal have a moustache (or glasses or wavy hair, etc.)?
3. What type of tree (or shrub or flower bed) is planted at the main entrance to the school?
4. What poster or sign is displayed outside the English office?
5. What's different today about the teacher's desk? (Arrange to remove or add an obvious object.)

Students compare answers and the point is generally made that we do not accurately observe what is right around us.

This discussion leads to reading a passage of a description of a small object or living thing.

Things Animate and Inanimate

The following passage from *Jungle Days* works well as William C. Beebe, the naturalist, looks into his microscope. The advantage of starting with the work of a scientific writer is that close observation and exactness are stressed.

> *Tiny though he (the insect) was, needing thirty-five of him to cover an inch of space, his coloring was exquisite; eyes dull scarlet, sparsely covered with golden hair, body armor of glistening black from head to tip of abdomen, with badge of yellow gold shining from between his wings. These wings were small, paddle-shaped and almost free of veining, while the scales on their surface glowed with iridescent play of lilac, yellow and pale green.*

Students analyze Beebe's technique: careful microscopic description noting size, shape, color, comparisons.

The next assignment is to describe a small object (preferably natural– e.g., stone, fruit, vegetable, flower, tropical fish). The teacher may supply the object; or students may choose their own and write a paragraph of description following Beebe's model. (See student sample on p. 162. For student writing modelled on a description by Marcel Proust, see p. 158).

The following passage describing a shark, from Beebe's *Adventuring with Beebe,* may be useful, especially because of the shark's film fame. Here students can analyze the method for describing a large creature, the order, the detail devoted to each part, and finally the overall impression.

> *The upper half of the pectoral fins and the whole head from these fins forward were very thickly covered with two-inch white, or creamy-white, spots in dense, irregular order. From here aft the spots became abruptly larger and farther apart, in regular rows separated by white vertical lines, as far as the second dorsal fin, where they gradually disappeared. . . . The head was exceedingly blunt and broad, with a mouth fully six feet across. The teeth in the huge maw were arranged in great sheets consisting of thousands upon thousands of denticles, each about an eighth of an inch in length. The tail fin was enormous and swept regularly back and forth like some part of a mighty engine, its tip swinging from one side to the other in three seconds through a space of ten feet.*
>
> *The strangest thing about the whole apparition was the result of the identity of the shark's general background color with that of the sea water. Whenever we first came within sight of one of these beings, the outline was so indistinct that, as I have already said, the effect was of the water being suddenly filled with a vast number of unconnected, drifting spots of white.*

Students may follow the reading of this passage by writing about a pet or an animal seen at the zoo.

Places

Descriptions of places are frequent in literature and can be used successfully as models. A lesson or group of lessons which may use descriptions of places can be neatly planned for June, after books have been collected and teachers can profitably give students ideas for vacation outings.

Guide books, newspaper and magazine articles describing points of interest, and literary descriptions of places will provide models for student writing. The finished work, describing favorite places to explore in your community or region, can be posted or put into a class reference scrapbook to suggest outings for summer.

The Michelin Guide to New York City makes an invaluable resource book for models.

VERRAZANO-NARROWS BRIDGE

> *Subway: 95th St. & 4th Ave. (RR line) The spider web silhouette of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, the longest suspension bridge in the world, links Brooklyn to Staten Island above The Narrows, the entrance to New York Harbor. It bears the name of the Italian explorer who discovered the site of New York. At the Brooklyn entrance to the bridge, a monument has been erected composed in part of stones from the castle of Verrazano, in Tuscany, and from the beach of Dieppe, the port from which he sailed. The Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority began construction of the bridge in January, 1959. The project cost $305,000,000. On November 21, 1964 the opening took place; Governor Nelson Rockefeller and the bridge's engineer, O.H. Ammann, officiated. It was Ammann's 85th birthday. (He also designed the George Washington Bridge.)*
>
> *Here are a few detailed figures: Total length: 13,700 feet. Main Span: 4260 feet. Height of the towers above the high waterwork: 690 feet. The bridge, which is high enough to allow the largest ocean liner to pass, has two levels of traffic, six lanes each, but no sidewalk for pedestrians. A toll bridge ($1.00 a car), it saves many miles and much driving time.*

THE BRONX ZOO

> *Open weekdays, March through October, from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. . . . Sundays & Holidays 10 A.M. to 5:30 P.M.; admission $1.00; free on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. Subway: East Tremont Ave.*
>
> *The Bronx Zoo, located in Bronx Park, was laid out at the end of the 19th century. On 252 acres, 3500 animals of more than 700 varieties live in indoor and outdoor exhibits; the visitor can watch the animals cavort a few yards away, separated in many exhibits by only a moat.*
>
> *Among the animals not to be missed are the American and European bison; the Mongolian wild horses; and the Pere David deer, which have the feet of a cow, the neck of a camel, the tail of a donkey and deer antlers. Visit also the African plains with their wild animals "at liberty"; the reptile house, the elephant house which also lodges rhinoceroses and hippopotamuses; the penguin house and the Aquatic Bird House; the buildings for the World of Darkness (night animals), and the World of Birds where hundreds of exotic birds can be observed in natural surroundings.*
>
> *In the Children's Zoo, youngsters can see and touch a variety of animals from rabbits and goats to reindeer, donkeys, and harmless snakes.*
>
> *In the Great Apes department may be found "the most dangerous animal in the world."*

A follow-up activity to the study of description of places involves students visiting a spot, describing it, and returning to it for another view at a different season of the year; for example, after a two-week interval in the spring when great changes have occurred.

Familiar scenes such as one's own block or house make good subjects for the student-writer, and teachers should not have difficulty in finding examples in the literature they are using.

Gwendolyn Brooks' autobiographical novel, *Maud Martha,* has a description of the living room which makes an excellent model for students to follow. They can transpose the scene to a room with which they are familiar, either in their own home or in a neighbor's or relative's home.

> *Maud Martha looked the living room over. Nicked old upright piano. Sag-seat leather arm-chair. Three or four straight chairs that had long ago given up the ghost of whatever shallow dignity they may have had in the beginning and looked completely disgusted with themselves and with the Brown family. Mantle with scroll decorations that usually seemed rather elegant but which since morning had become unspeakably vulgar, impossible.*
>
> *There was a small hole in the sad-colored rug, near the sofa. Not an outrageous hole. But she shuddered. She dashed to the sofa, maneuvered it till the hole could not be seen.*

Students may begin "I looked the ________________________ room over," and go on to describe the room, following the enumeration of the contents, as Gwendolyn Brooks has done.

Mood

From descriptions of tangible things, the teacher can proceed to descriptions of more complex subjects: scenes involving moods, natural phenomena, feelings, people, events, where description is often meshed with narration.

In searching for models teachers should not overlook selections to be used for modelling from the "literature" created by their students. A line from a splendid description by a student, Camille Marino of Junior High School 211 Brooklyn, first prize winner in a citywide competition, can serve as an excellent model for emulation:

It rained today, so hard that my window shook with the thunder.

Ask students to come up with other examples.

It rained today, so hard that . . . .

or

Teachers can suit the lines to the season.

It snowed today, so hard that . . . .

or

It was so hot today that . . . .

In the same selection by Camille Marino, entitled "My Grandfather," the young writer uses an unusual modifier in lines describing tender memories associated with a dead beloved grandfather as she walks back from the funeral:

I walked back retasting the applesauce *moments.*

Students may try finding other nouns to use as adjectives to associate experiences and feelings of their own effectively:

I walked away retasting the ________ *moments (or days or times).*

or

I thought back to those _________ *days*

Teachers may suggest using nouns to associate sounds or sights.

People

Writing descriptions of people which come alive is not easy for the young writer. But the novels and short stories taught in school abound with marvelous models which may help him or her.

Just as with describing things or places the photographic type of description is easier for beginning modelling, so with people as subjects it may be best to begin with a model which has been described photographically, and later move on to models described more impressionistically.

Teachers may find that the techniques may be illustrated more effectively by using pictures to make one's point. Thus, try using a photograph or realistic portrait as a starter: (see p. 73.)

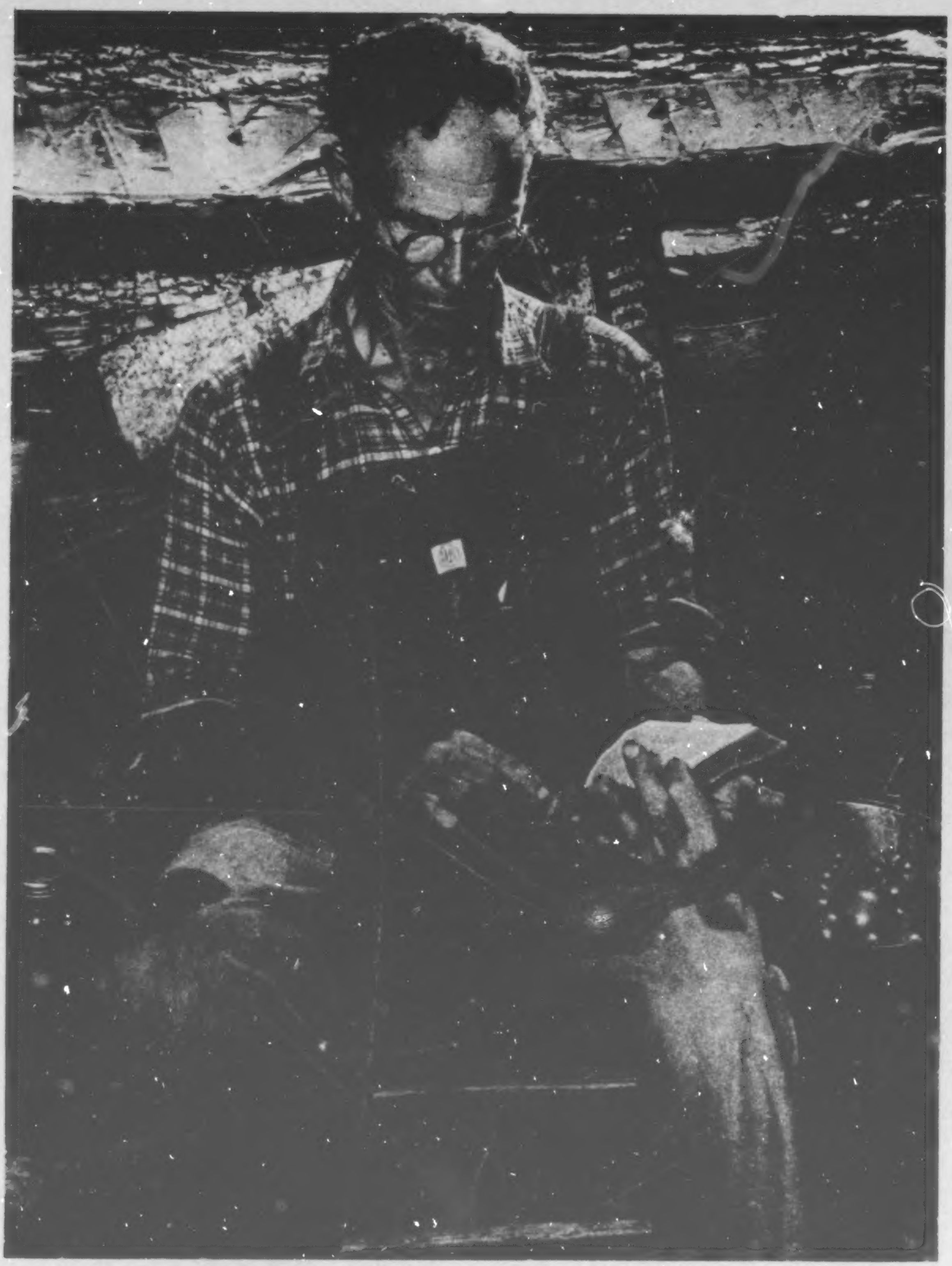


Photo by Townsend Godsey of Pix, Inc. Reprinted with the permission of the Westport Public Library, Westport, Conn.

After noting the nearly exact reproduction of a person, present to the students a description, such as the following of Sophia Western excerpted from Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones,* in which they will note the structure moving systematically, feature by feature, in a sort of catalogue:

> *Her hair, which was black, was so luxuriant, that it reached her middle, before she cut it to comply with the modern fashion; and it was now curled gracefully in her neck. . . . Her forehead might have been higher but her eyebrows were full, black and arched. Her black eyes had a lustre in them, which all her softness could not extinguish. Her nose was regular, and in her mouth were two rows of ivory.*
>
> *Her cheeks were of the oval kind; and in her right she had a dimple, which the least smile discovered. Her chin had certainly its share in forming the beauty of her face. Her complexion had rather more of the lily than of the rose.*

Students should then try some descriptions of their own using as models members of their family, strangers seen on the bus, subway, or street, or even people on television.

It is seldom advisable for students to describe each other; instances of hurt feelings are too frequent.

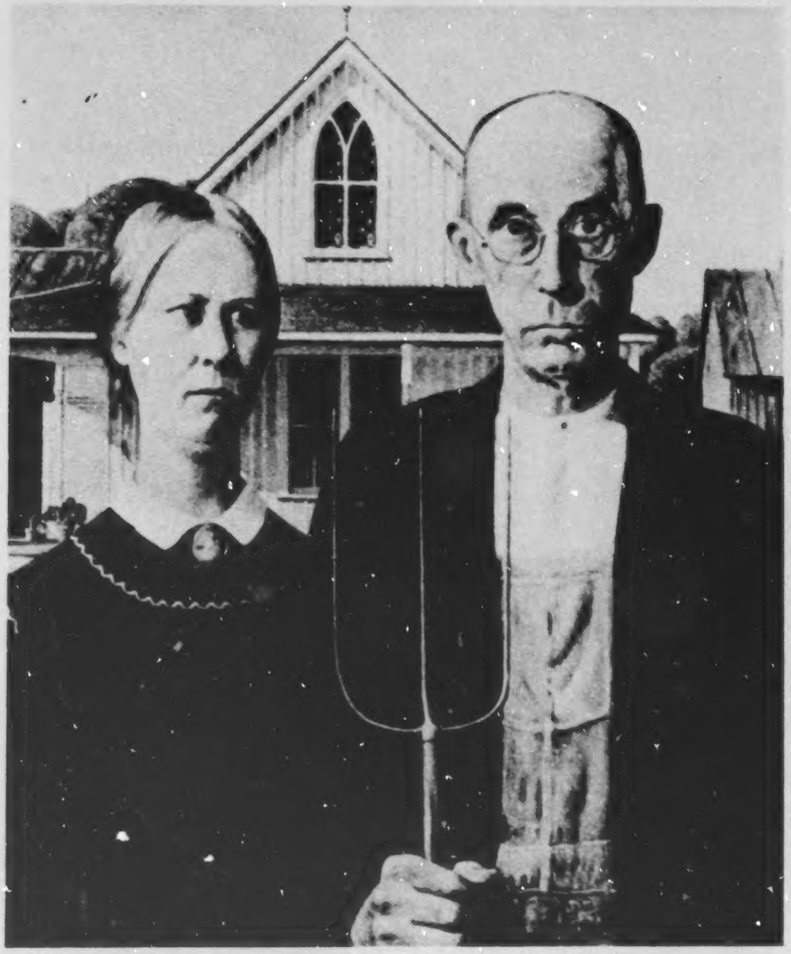
A. Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories offer excellent examples of detailed, precise descriptions of people which call upon the writer's acute powers of observation. Note how Dr. Watson and Holmes describe a departing visitor in "The Case of Mistaken Identity." Watson begins:

> *"Well, she had a slate-coloured, broad-brimmed straw hat, with a feather of a brickish red. Her jacket was black, with black beads sewn upon it, and a fringe of little black jet ornaments. Her dress was brown, rather darker than coffee colour, with a little purple plush at the neck and sleeves. Her gloves were grayish and were worn through at the right forefinger. Her boots I didn't observe. She had small, round, hanging gold earrings, and a general air of being fairly well-to-do, in a vulgar, comfortable, easy-going way."*
>
> *Sherlock Holmes clapped his hands softly together and chuckled.*
>
> *" 'Pon my word, Watson, you are coming along wonderfully. You have really done very well indeed. It is true that you have missed everything of importance, but you have hit upon the method. . . . As you observe, this woman had plush upon her sleeves, which is a most useful material for showing traces. The double line a little above the wrist, where the typewritist presses against the table, was beautifully defined. . . . I then glanced at her face, and observing the dint of a pince-nez at either side of her nose, I ventured a remark upon short sight and typewriting, which seemed to surprise her.*
>
> *"It was very obvious. I was then much surprised and interested on glancing down to observe that, though the boots which she was wearing were not unlike each other, they were really odd ones. . . . Now when you see that a young lady, otherwise neatly dressed, has come away from home with odd-boots, half-buttoned, it is no great deduction to say that she came away in a hurry.*
>
> *"I noted, in passing, that she had written a note before leaving home but after being fully dressed. You observed that her right glove was torn at the forefinger, but you did not apparently see that both glove and finger were stained with violet ink. She had written in a hurry and dipped her pen too deep. It must have been this morning, or the mark would not remain upon the finger."*

Ask students to observe some strangers carefully and to try to make assumptions about their occupations, personalities, habits, or dispositions. Or the teacher may ask a colleague or student from another class to come into the room, wearing mismatched shoes, odd make-up, two pocketbooks, et al.,on the pretext of delivering a message. After he or she departs, ask the class to write a description of that person.

After some descriptions of this type, the teacher may move on to some which are less realistic; that is, those which select a certain few outstanding features for emphasis. Again an example of a portrait by a non-representational artist may serve to analyze the artist's technique.

Compare the figures below with the photograph on p. 73.



Grant Wood, American Gothic, 1930. Art Institute of Chicago, Friends of American Art Collection, Chicago, Ill.

Now read a description of a character from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* by James Joyce, as an example.

> *Stephen lifted his eyes in wonder and saw for a moment Father Dolan's whitegrey not young face, his baldy whitegrey head with fluff at the sides of it, the steel rims of his spectacles and his nocoloured eyes looking through the glasses.*

Or read the verbal picture of Ichabod Crane, from Washington Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

> *The [name] Crane was not inapplicable to his person. He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weathercock perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew.*

Students will note how the author has selected a few salient features to create appearance and personality.

The following passage from *David Copperfield,* when David runs away and arrives at the home of his aunt Betsy Trotwood, makes a good model for emulation because of its orderly structure.

> *My shoes were by this time in a woeful condition. The soles had shed themselves bit by bit, and the upper leathers had broken and burst until the very shape and form of shoes had departed from them. My hat (which had served me for a nightcap, too) was so crushed and bent, that no old battered handleless saucepan on a dunghill need have been ashamed to vie with it. My shirt and trousers, stained with heat, dew, grass, and the Kentish soil on which I had slept—and torn besides—might have frightened the birds from my aunt's garden, as I stood at the gate. My hair had known no comb or brush since I left London. My face, neck, and hands, from unaccustomed exposure to the air and sun, were burnt to a berry-brown. From head to foot I was powdered almost as white with chalk and dust, as if I had come out of a lime-kiln.*

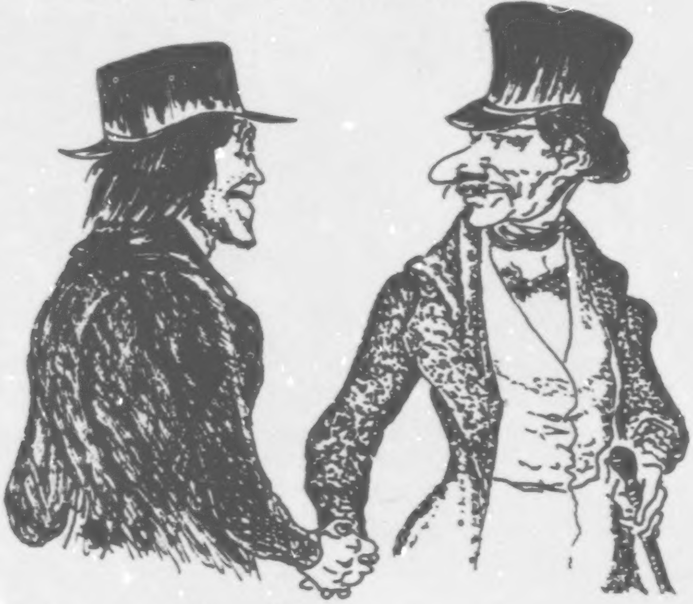
After students examine the way in which Dickens has described the character, moving from head to toe largely in terms of clothing, they can write original descriptions following the guide but changing the situation to the end of a hike, a rainstorm, dressed for a prom, or the like.

A less complex model is the selection from the short story, "Sixteen," by Maureen Daly, written when she herself was sixteen. Students may change the fads and styles of the 1930s to those of today.

> *Now don't get me wrong. I mean, I want you to understand from the beginning that I'm not really dumb. I know what a girl should do and what she shouldn't. I get around. I read. I listen to the radio. And I have two older sisters. So, you see, I know what the score is. I know it's smart to wear tweedish shirts and shaggy sweaters with the sleeves pushed up and pearls and ankle socks and saddle shoes that look as if they've seen the world. And I know that your hair should be long, almost to your shoulders, and sleek as a wet seal, just a little fluffed on the ends and you should wear a campus hat or beanie or else a peasant hankie if you've that sort of face. Now, me, I never wear a hankie. It makes my face look wide. Well, anyway, I'm not exactly too small town either. I read Winchell's column. You get to know what New York boy is that way about some pineapple princess on the West Coast and what Broadway pretty is currently the prettiest. It gives you that worldly feeling. And I know that anyone who orders a strawberry sundae in a drugstore instead of a lemon coke would probably be dumb enough to wear colored ankle socks with high-heeled pumps or use Evening in Paris with a tweed suit. But I'm sort of drifting. This isn't what I wanted to tell you. I just wanted to give you the general idea of how I'm not so dumb. It's important that you understand that.*

Caricature

An understandng of caricature in literature may also be taught effectively with the aid of pictures. Newspapers and magazines provide numerous examples of caricatures of celebrities from the fields of politics, sports, theatre, film, and the arts whose faces are familiar to students. Analysis of these figures will introduce the use of caricature, the exaggeration of the peculiarities or the defects of people. Teachers will lead to the analysis of caricatures in literature, often used for humor or propaganda, and help students distinguish between caricature and stereotype. Differences between caricature and impression should be noted.

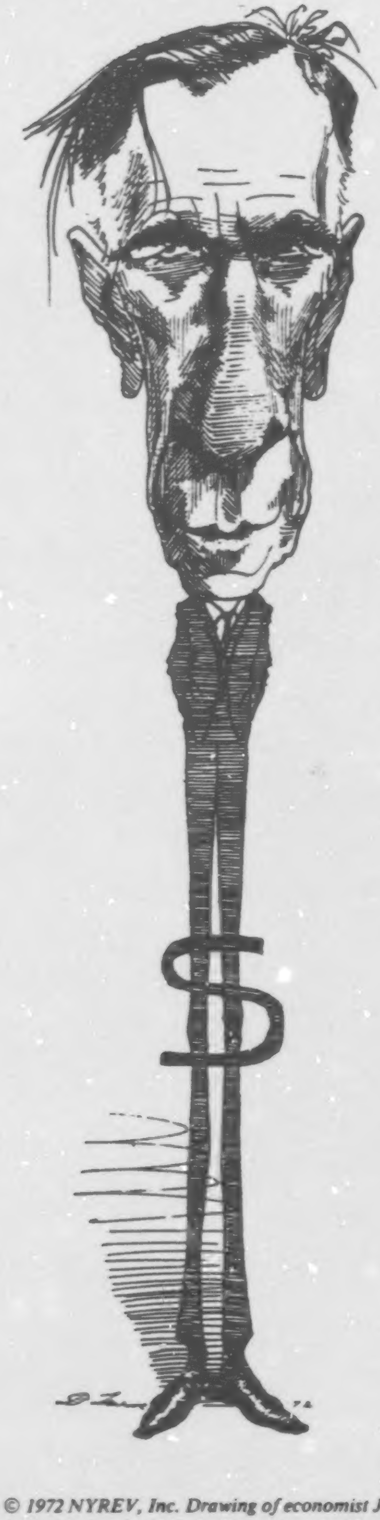


1838 lithograph by Honoré Daumier entitled *Study in Expression*. From Werner Hoffman, *Caricature form Leonardo to Picasso* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc.) p. 114

Examination of the lithographs by Daumier, with an analysis of the characters portrayed, can lead to discussion of caricatures in literature such as the following description of old Mr. Turveydrop in Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*:

> *He was a fat old gentleman with a false complexion, false teeth, false whiskers, and a wig. He had a fur collar, and he had a padded breast to his coat, which only wanted a star or a broad blue ribbon to be complete. He was pinched in, and swelled out, and got up, and strapped down, as much as he could possibly bear. He had such a neckcloth on (puffing his very eyes out of their natural shape), and his chin and even his ears so sunk into it, that it seemed as though he must inevitably double up, if it were cast loose. He had, under his arm, a hat of great size and weight, shelving downward from the crown to the brim; and in his hand a pair of white gloves, with which he flapped it, as he stood poised on one leg, in a high-shouldered, round-elbowed state of elegance not to be surpassed. He had a cane, he had an eye-glass, he had a snuff-box, he had rings, he had wristbands, he had everything but any touch of nature; he was not like youth, he was not like age, he was not like anything in the world but a model of Deportment.*

Mature students may try to write caricatures of people in the news or of fictitious characters they create.



© 1972 NYREV, Inc. Drawing of economist John Kenneth Galbraith by David Levin. Reproduced with permission.

Narrative Writing

The narrative is a form students are familiar with from the earliest grades and pre-school experiences. They may already be alerted to techniques of narration from analysis of the books they read in school and are aware of sequence, selection of significant and interesting elements, suspense, climax, and resolution.* The teacher reinforces an understanding of these elements in the literature selected for class study so that students may be able to employ these techniques in their own writing.

The short story art form is a difficult form to write successfully and had best be reserved for mature or especially talented students, but most pupils can write amusing or moving anecdotes happenings observed, and real life experiences.

Have the students follow the pattern used in this passage from Richard Wright's *Black Boy.*

> *There was the wonder I felt when I first saw a brace of mountainlike, spotted, black-and-white horses clopping down a dusty road through clouds of powdered clay.*
>
> *There was the delight I caught in seeing long straight rows of red and green vegetables stretching away in the sun to the bright horizon.*
>
> *There was the vague sense of the infinite as I looked down upon the yellow, dreaming waters of the Mississippi River from the verdant bluffs of Natchez.*
>
> *There was the teasing and impossible desire to imitate the petty pride of sparrows wallowing and flouncing in the red dust of country roads.*
>
> *There was the yearning for identification loosed in me by the sight of a solitary ant carrying a burden upon a mysterious journey.*

The students can be encouraged to finish these lines in their own words and from their own experiences.

There was the wonder . . .

There was the delight in . . .

There was the vague sense of . . .

There was the yearning for . . .

Simple stories like myths and folk tales may be successfully used as models for student emulation. Myths and folk tales are a fundamental part of most secondary school curricula and are universally enjoyed by students. The patterns or formulae for such stories are traditional and familiar, and students generally find little difficulty in writing their own.

Original myths are reasonably foolproof, and students can follow the pattern of the transformation theme in which natural phenomena, such as echoes, stars, attributes of animals or insects, are caused by the result of some particular set of events, e.g., Echo, Pandora, Arachne.

Pupils are generally successful in going beyond the book they've just finished by writing an imaginary adventure. After reading *The Odyssey*, they might, for example, enjoy adding another sailor's yarn to those already spun by Odysseus and write another story still more fantastic than any already described.

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* For more thorough discussion, see curriculum bulletin *Handbook for English Language Arts, Grades 5-12, Speech and Composition*, Board of Education of the City of New York, 1967-68 Series, No. 21, pp. 197-198.

Original myths need not always be serious. Pupils may enjoy devising humorous or even ridiculous ones like those by James Thurber, or the following one by Woody Allen (from "Fabulous Tales and Mythical Beasts" in *Without Feathers*).

THE GREAT ROE

> *The great roe is a mythological beast with the head of a lion and the body of a lion, though not the same lion. The roe is reputed to sleep for a thousand years and then suddenly rise in flames, particularly if it was smoking when it dozed off.*
>
> *Odysseus was said to have awakened a roe after six hundred years but found it listless and grouchy, and it begged to remain in bed just two hundred more years.*
>
> *The appearance of a roe is generally considered unlucky and usually precedes a famine or news of a cocktail party.*

Original folk tales are not difficult for most students. After reading a folk tale, they analyze it in terms of the physical or mental qualities of the protagonist and the way these traits are exaggerated to reach the supernatural level. Students may then select a figure in local history, or a family member, and build up a story in the same fashion.

Original fables and tall stories are other types of narrative which students can write successfully from models.

Since most writers, professional and nonprofessional, generally write best from their own deeply felt experience, it is easy to mesh the narrative mode in literature with student writing. There is an abundance of exciting first-person stories, largely or partially autobiographical, among the works selected for in-school or supplementary reading based closely or loosely on the author's own life. R. R. Knudson, author of many young adult books, said at a NYSEC Conference that we all have within us a "young adult" novel: not everyone perhaps can write a major novel, but we all have our own story to tell. Some authors have told their own stories only once, but with consummate skill, and have written little else— like Henry Roth in *Call It Sleep*, or Ralph Ellison in *The Invisible Man*.

Many have used their own lives as subject matter many times, and the school bookrooms and libraries are filled with exciting first-person stories which suggest to the young writer experiences suitable for recounting: such as, *Jane Eyre, David Copperfield, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, Huckleberry Finn, To Kill a Mockingbird, Catcher in the Rye, Black Boy*. Reading samples of literature such as these leads to discussion of how to analyze and describe one's own feelings and emotions with the emphasis on honesty. (See "My Family" on p. 158.)

Catcher in the Rye, which has had an enormous effect on all adolescent novels since its publication in 1945, was the first novel in which the story is told from the adolescent's point of view at the time of writing rather than from the point of view of an adult looking back on his or her own youth. The very beginning of the J.D. Salinger novel can serve to set the conversational tone for student writers to emulate.

> *If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. In the first place, that stuff bores me, and in the second place, my parents would have about two hemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty personal about them. They're quite touchy about anything like that, especially my father.*

> *They're nice and all—I'm not saying that—but they're also touchy as hell. Besides, I'm not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography or anything. I'll just tell you about this.*

Dialogue will enliven the telling and later the writing of anecdotes and stories of personal experience. A scene from *Zanballer*, a young adult novel by R. R. Knudson, contains a dialogue between a student and the principal which is, the author once explained, exactly as it really happened.

> *Zan: Phony nonsense. I want to play ball. I like to win.*
>
> *Principal: Competition, that seems to be your drive . . . Did you know that the county spelling bee comes along next month? (you could become) the Arlington County Spelling Queen. . . .*
>
> *Zan: To stand forever between the Pillsbury Baking Princess and the Embroiderer-of-the Year. Oh, no you don't. I want to play ball.*
>
> *Principal: Say, you'd look mighty cute in a snappy band costume. . . .*
>
> *Zan: [But] I can't play an instrument.*
>
> *Principal: Never mind that. Any fool can bang a drum.*
>
> *Zan: They never give girls the drum. We always have to play the glockenspiel.*
>
> *Principal: Then bang a glockenspiel. . . .*

Students may role play a scene which they are writing about, tape it, and then edit and use the dialogue.

Many of the students will be keeping their own journals, so the dissection of the journals, letters, and diaries of professional writers may be helpful in suggesting approaches.

A major snowstorm, a blackout, a great fire, are phenomena students may have experienced and will describe in their journals. By studying eyewitness accounts by professional writers and journalists, frequently found in newspapers, students can study techniques for vivid writing. The following is Jack London's "The San Francisco Earthquake."

> *On Wednesday morning at a quarter past five came the earthquake. A minute later the flames were leaping upward. In a dozen different quarters south of Market Street, in the working-class ghetto, and in the factories, fires started. There was no opposing the flames. There was no organization, no communication. All the cunning adjustments of a twentieth-century city had been smashed by the earthquake. The streets were humped into ridges and depressions, and piled with the debris of fallen walls. The steel rails were twisted into perpendicular and horizontal angles. The telephone and telegraph systems were disrupted. And the great water mains had burst. All the shrewd contrivances and safeguards of man had been thrown out of gear by thirty seconds' twitching of the earth-crust.*

Perhaps students may use their journals to record their deep emotions, just as Anne Frank did in her famous diary, and find satisfaction in recording feelings of resentment at injustice, sorrow, or exultation.

Saturday, 7 November, 1942

*Dear Kitty,**

Mummy is frightfully irritable and that always seems to herald unpleasantness for me. Is it just chance that Daddy and Mummy never rebuke Margot and that they always drop on me for everything? Yesterday evening, for instance: Margot was reading a book with lovely drawings in it; she got up and went upstairs, put the book down ready to go on with it later. I wasn't doing anything, so picked up the book and started looking at the pictures. Margot came back, saw "her" book in my hands, wrinkled her forehead and asked for the book back. Just because I wanted to look a little further on, Margot got more and more angry. Then Mummy joined in: "Give the book to Margot; she was reading it," she said. Daddy came into the room. He didn't even know what it was all about, but saw the injured look on Margot's face and promptly dropped on me: "I'd like to see what you'd say if Margot ever started looking at one of your books!" I gave way at once, laid the book down, and left the room offended, as they thought. It so happened I was neither offended nor cross, just miserable. It wasn't right of Daddy to judge without knowing what the squabble was about. I would have given Margot the book myself, and much more quickly, if Mummy and Daddy hadn't interfered. They took Margot's part at once, as though she were the victim of some great injustice.

---

* The name Anne used to address her diary.

Expository Writing

Another example from literature for students to experiment with is a passage such as the one from *A Tale of Two Cities.* Have them paraphrase this opening in their own writing. It is not necessary to use the whole paragraph; just using a section of it will give the flavor.

> *It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.*

Students may follow Dickens' model of combining a series of opposites and apply it to our own decade, or the atmosphere of a school, a camp, or a neighborhood. Or they may expand the pattern as we see in the composition, in the appendix, on p. 176.

Examples may be found for emulating the following of directions—cook books, driving manuals, homeowners' manuals. "How to" books abound with explanations. Take an opening sentence and invite students to change the topic and rewrite the directions; e.g., change "How to Drive" to "How to Drive a Kiddie Car"; or change "How to Jog" to "How to Walk." (See student written sample, "How to Make a Mess, p. 142.)Students may wish to use any of these for journal entries, or each student in the class may contribute to a cooperative piece.

Mimi Sheraton's columns of critiques of restaurants in *The New York Times* may inspire students to write up a similar critique based on a visit to a restaurant in their neighborhood or visited on a trip. This may be an opportunity for parody by describing, in a mock-serious manner, a coffee shop or diner or the local teenage hangout.

> The dining room of Ruc, a Czechoslovakian restaurant located at 312 East 72 Street, is brightly attractive, with schmaltzy but decorative folkloric paintings.
>
> The kitchen's level of performance seems to have gone down slightly, but enough good dishes remain to warrant a one-star rating, especially when one considers the amazingly low prices.
>
> Oddly enough, the paprika-and-sour-cream-sauced stew dishes, such as goulash and chicken paprikash, are disappointing, even though they are what one would expect to be acceptable at low prices. Instead, it is the crisp roast half-duck, the fresh and generous portion of roast chicken and the braised veal shank that are preferable. Boiled beef suffers somewhat from being sliced far in advance, but it is saved by a pungent dill cream sauce. The Wiener schnitzel, though hardly made of first-class veal, is satisfying, and so are the breaded, fried calf's brains.
>
> Complete dinners begin with soup and the kitchen does a very good job on it, whether the day's choice is beef consomme with spatzle-type dumplings or with peppery liver dumplings, or lentil soup with frankfurters. The cream of giblet and vegetable soup would be better if it was thinner, but even so a dash of salt and pepper make it palatable. Except for the pleasant creamy ham salad that fills a tomato, a la carte appetizers are not worth their price.
>
> Big, airy bread dumplings are served with most main courses and are much better than the greasy, flat-tasting potatoes. Hot sauerkraut and sweet-and-sour red cabbage can be fine when freshly cooked, as they usually are on weekends, or mushy when reheated on slow weeknights. That is generally true of other dishes. Cucumber salad and pickled beets are livelier than other salads.

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* Extracted from Mimi Sheraton, "Restaurants; A Czech Garden is Blooming Again," *New York Times,* Friday June 13, 1980. Reprinted with permission.

Persuasive Writing

Persuasive writing is in some ways the most difficult of the modes because it requires logical organization and clarity as well as cogent expression.

Using one's reading as an aid to improving one's own writing will help students see the effectiveness of various techniques and devices. The teacher may find, in the daily newspapers, examples of speeches delivered by public officials to use as models. Sometimes there are editorials, or columns, or letters to the editor on timely topics, which may be diagnosed for structure and effectiveness. An example which merits analysis is the following column by Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, on the voucher system. It demonstrates the use of an opening paragraph (or two) stating the problem, followed by several paragraphs using examples to develop the ideas, and concluding with a summary.

> *Earlier this year there was a petition campaign in California for a referendum on school vouchers. The campaign failed this year, but supporters have announced that they will try again.*
>
> *There have been a number of different voucher proposals. Basically, most of the schemes would give parents a voucher or check for the amount needed to pay for the cost of providing education in a public school, but parents could use the voucher to pay for educating their children at private or parochial schools as well.*
>
> *If vouchers were to go into effect, there would be competition among schools in much the same way as there is now competition among toothpaste companies, auto manufacturers and department stores. Chances are pretty good that schools would advertise in newspapers and magazines and over radio and television. Some enterprising schools might offer gifts to newly enrolling students in much the same way that savings banks offer such gifts to new depositors. Or, just as savings banks offer gifts to current account holders for bringing in a new depositor, students might be offered rewards for enrolling their friends!*
>
> (Six paragraphs citing advertisements of private schools are quoted and analyzed, and their claims questioned.)
>
> *Of course, this does not mean that public schools are all excellent—they are not. Or that private schools are all bad and practice deception—clearly not so. We should beware of false advertising in education just as we are elsewhere. Those who claim that public schools are all bad—and that private schools are the answer—are clearly wrong. There is a place for private schools in our society, but those claims should not be pressed to the point where public schools are destroyed.*
>
> *If vouchers are adopted, and parents are faced with claims and counterclaims of school success—without the usual consumer protection—caveat emptor. Only in this case, instead of the loss of a few dollars on a poor product, what may be lost is a child's future.*

*Extracted from an advertisement in the *New York Times* paid for by the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO. Mr. Shaker's column is entitled "Where We Stand."

There are other effective methods of persuasion which students should be encouraged to consider. Examine the passage from historian Herbert Zinn's essay on "Civil Disobedience" in which he uses analogy to make his point strongly:

> *It is not hard to show that there is value to specific good laws; they fix, strengthen, remind us of some moral proposition, like that against murder, against driving recklessly on a public highway, against barring someone from a public place because of his race. But does the idea of obedience to law in general have such a high intrinsic value that the law must be held sacrosanct even where it violates an important human right or protects an evil condition? . . . .*
>
> *A common argument is that disobedience even of bad laws is wrong because that fosters a general disrespect for all laws, including good ones, which we need. But this is like arguing that children should be made to eat rotten fruit along with the good, lest they get the idea all fruit should be thrown away. Isn't it likely that someone forced to eat the rotten fruit may because of that develop a distaste for all fruit?*

Citing statistics provides a strong argument to support one's opinion. Students must do careful research to find applicable and reliable material. In the following passage from Ramsey Clark's *Crime in America*, statistical evidence is most convincing.

> *The murder and suicide rates by gunfire in our country are incredibly higher than the rates in other advanced nations. Japan, with one-half our population, had 16 murders and 68 suicides by gunfire in 1966 compared to 6,855 murders and 10,407 suicides in the United States. Australia, still a pioneer country herself, had 57 gun murders among its 11 million people in 1965. Here in America the rate is seven times higher. . . .*
>
> *Murders and other crimes committed with firearms occur more frequently where guns are most plentiful and gun control laws least stringent.*
>
> *Rhode Island, New York and Massachusetts have strong gun control laws. Arizona, Texas and Mississippi have more guns per capita and very weak gun control laws.*
>
> *A comparison of these states is informative:*

	Percentage of Murders by Gun	Total Murders per 100,000
Rhode Island	24	1.4
New York	31.8	4.8
Massachusetts	35.5	2.4
Arizona	66.4	6.1
Texas	68.7	9.1
Mississippi	70.9	9.7

> *The inescapable lesson is that easy access to guns causes thousands of preventable murders, suicides and accidental deaths.*

Some of the orators of the past who argue most persuasively use styles which are more formal than those appropriate for today's students. Nevertheless they may serve as models for their power of highly charged language and their use of rhythm and prose.

A less flamboyant but most effective style is used in the following excerpt from a speech by Gloria Steinem:

> *The first problem for all of us, men and women, is not to learn but to unlearn. We are filled with the popular wisdom of several centuries just past, and we are terrified to give it up. Patriotism means obedience, age means wisdom, woman means submission, black means inferior. These are preconceptions imbedded so deeply in our thinking that we honestly may not know that they are there.*

Students may model their essay by beginning:

"The first problem for _________ is _________" Then the students go on to explain some reasons why the problem exists.

Teachers will become increasingly alert to finding selections appropriate for modeling in the literature assigned to the class, in current newspapers and periodicals, and in the literature created by their own students.

Modeling is like serving an apprenticeship to a professional writer. Students will become closely acquainted, through modeling, with professional works which will show them effective techniques they are not likely to develop on their own. Modeling will help students acquire versatility, and eventually improve their own writing style.

5. Revising, Editing, Proofreading

Not every piece of writing – by student or professional – calls for revision. Revising should be restricted to those pieces of work worth the time and effort. And that depends on both the interest of the writer and the nature and purpose of the writing.

Some few pieces of writing say at the outset what the particular writer means to say as well as possible under the particular circumstances for the particular purpose. Other pieces have such limited purpose or interest for the writer and reader that revising is pointless. Obviously a note to a parent saying that you have gone to a friend's house for supper will be written according to standards that differ from those governing a term paper. A school "assignment" may have less interest to the writer than a piece motivated by a student desire to communicate.

The extent to which a composition is revised depends not on how poor it is but on how good it *needs* to be to accomplish the purpose of its writer – and how good it *can* be, given the writer's interest and skills.

Teachers will have less need to resort to the carrot of a better grade if genuine reasons for revising and editing are built into the classroom writing assignments. Real letters get real answers. A real audience laughs at humor, sympathizes with misfortune, agrees or disagrees with opinion, understands or is confused by directions. Opportunities should be provided for sharing in groups, small and large; in class and beyond; orally and in print.

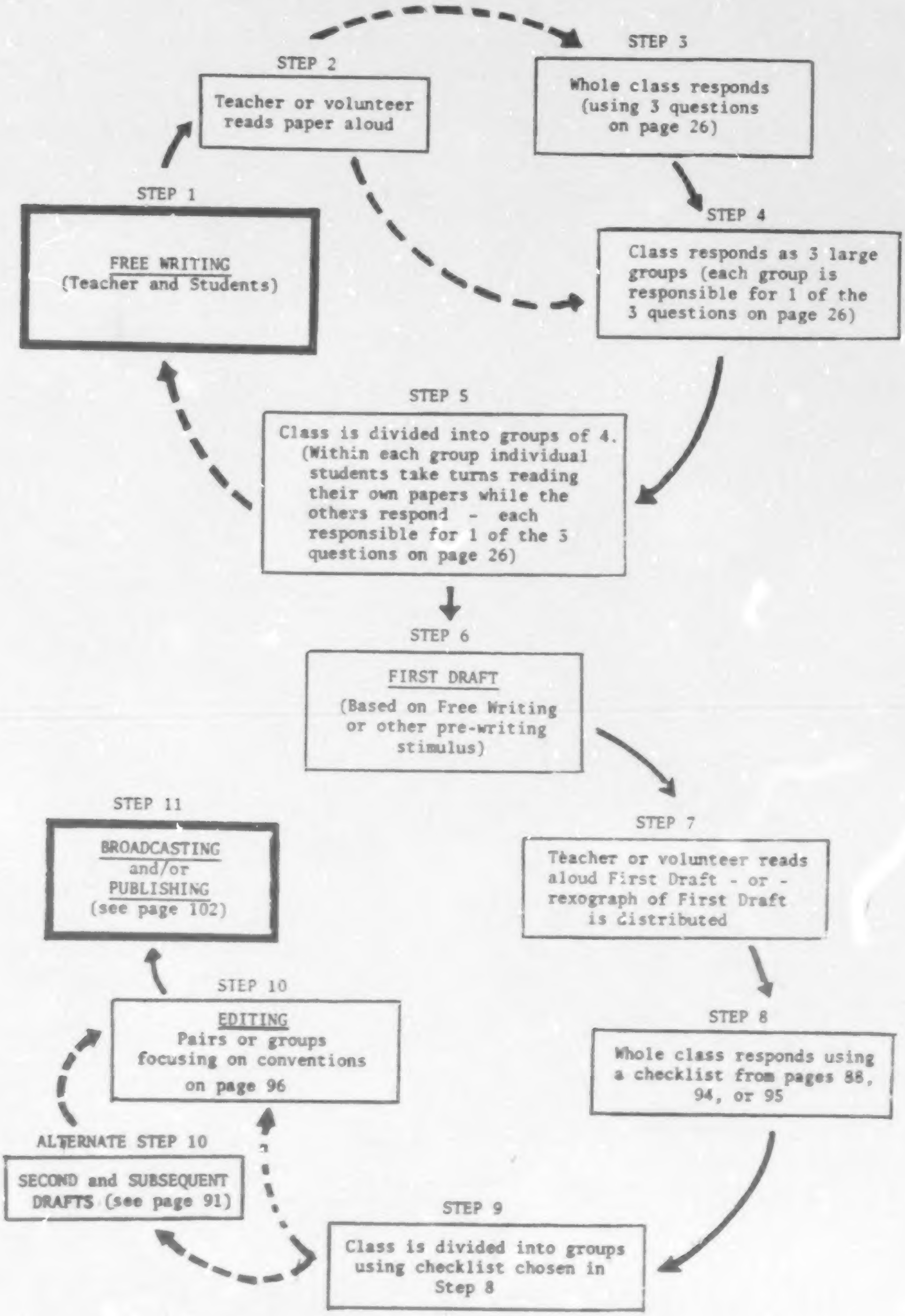
Grouping

The bulk of the time devoted to group sessions should be spent revising content and organization rather than such mechanical aspects of the piece as usage, punctuation, spelling, etc. It is helpful if one or more students who seem to have some mastery of mechanics are assigned to each group, so that they can serve as special helpers or consultants. However, emphasis on the conventions and mechanics too early in the process may result in making students more concerned with correctness than with the generation and communication of ideas through writing. This is especially true of the younger writer who may be more willing to make editing corrections than to make revisions. The same pupil who understands the need for correct spelling and punctuation in papers to be displayed or sent to someone may be more sensitive about efforts to tamper with the content of his/her work. The cycling lessons tha follow, which divide the responsibility for revision among several students as well as the teacher, should help such a student understand the need for revision in addition to editing. However, beginning writers need a great deal of encouragement and the teacher may need to monitor the revision process to assure that no paper is subject to so many suggestions for change that nothing of the original is left intact.

Why Revise?

- I've changed my mind since I wrote this piece.
- I have more to say now.
- My initial information was wrong.
- The same idea is reflected too often.
- I wasn't making myself clear. I can improve the message by moving sentences or paragraphs around.
- I emphasized the wrong thing. Perhaps I spent too much space on one thing.
- This piece should come before that one.
- This part needs more details (information, description, figures, facts, examples).
- That part has too many unnecessary details.
- My language and tone are not right for the audience I want to reach. It won't do what I want it to do.

THE WRITING CYCLE --
FROM PREWRITING TO PUBLICATION


STEP 1
FREE WRITING
(Teacher and Students)
STEP 2
Teacher or volunteer reads paper aloud
STEP 3
Whole class responds (using 3 questions on page 26)
STEP 4
Class responds as 3 large groups (each group is responsible for 1 of the 3 questions on page 26)
STEP 5
Class is divided into groups of 4. (Within each group individual students take turns reading their own papers while the others respond - each responsible for 1 of the 3 questions on page 26)
STEP 6
FIRST DRAFT
(Based on Free Writing or other pre-writing stimulus)
STEP 7
Teacher or volunteer reads aloud First Draft - or - rexograph of First Draft is distributed
STEP 8
Whole class responds using a checklist from pages 88, 94, or 95
STEP 9
Class is divided into groups using checklist chosen in Step 8
STEP 10
EDITING
Pairs or groups focusing on conventions on page 96
ALTERNATE STEP 10
SECOND and SUBSEQUENT DRAFTS (see page 91)
STEP 11
BROADCASTING
and/or
PUBLISHING
(see page 102)

General Steps toward Revising

1. Emphasize that a first draft is not forever by having the writer do the first draft in pencil, leaving wide margins and spaces between lines (or type double space).

2. Allow several days to elapse after a piece is written. Store it in the student's folder.

3. Ask the student to select, from three or four rough drafts, one which particularly interests him/her.

4. Motivate revision by setting a purpose – the letter will be mailed, the petition forwarded, the story or editorial "published" or "broadcast."

5. Ask the student to reread his/her draft all the way through and make those changes immediately suggested by this fresh look. Does it say what he/she means to say?

6. Have students insert, cross out, rearrange right on the draft, unless the whole concept of what he or she wants to say has changed and the student feels the need to recast the whole piece.

7. Once the writer has made these initial changes, small or large, it's time for another audience. Pair students or break the class into groups for additional peer suggestions for revision. However, unlike free writing where focus is purely on ideas, focus now is extended to include the organization and development.

General Revision Checklist

Below is a general checklist of questions which can be used for initial critiquing of various writing modes. It is especially needed when students are given the option of selecting from their folders any piece of writing they care to rework. (See pp. 94-95 for checklist for specific modes.)

1. Which part, if any, is confusing?

2. Do ideas or events follow each other in an order that makes sense? What, if anything, needs changing?

3. Is there enough detail?

4. How can the opening be made more interesting?

5. Is there a better way to end?

Revision Lesson 1

Aim:

To use small groups to help students develop methods of revising their own papers

Development:

- Refer to group demonstration (see p. 29) and review revision questions. Note that focus is on content, organization, and development.
- Have students select a first draft from their folders. Point out that some students may immediately spot changes they'd like to make, especially since they haven't seen their papers for a while, and may almost feel they are seeing them as papers written by other people. (Explain that many professional writers put aside their papers for a few days or longer before attempting to revise them, and that students might very well put aside future papers for a time before attempting to revise them.)
- Allow five to ten minutes for each student to reread his/her own draft, possibly aloud, and make or indicate possible changes.
- Form student groups.
- Remind students that the more helpful they are to one another, the easier it will be for each writer to revise his/her paper. Keeping the revision list in mind as each paper is read, group members take turns making suggestions and raising questions while the writer takes notes.
- Circulate to see that groups are functioning well. From time to time, join a group for a while but avoid dominating the discussion and make sure the students continue to view each other as their main audience.
- End group work after each writer has had a response to his/her writing.
- Taking note of peer comments, students begin second draft to be finished during a subsequent period.

It is not recommended that students be permitted to write second drafts at home at this time. Some youngsters are completely frustrated because needed help isn't available, and others rely so heavily on outside help that the writing is no longer student writing.

Revision Lesson 2

As an alternative lesson, silent group work can be substituted for group discussion of first drafts by the use of worksheets for written responses. These worksheets, however, should focus attention on content, organization, and development, rather than on mechanics.

Aim:

To use peer response to help students develop methods of revising their own papers

Development:

- Each student picks up a worksheet and is instructed to write his/her name on the top.
- Each student selects a first draft from his/her folder.
- Students are reminded that the more helpful they are, the easier it is for the writer to revise his/her draft.
- Class breaks up into groups.
- Each student passes his/her first draft and worksheet to another member of the group to serve as "first reader." Each "first reader" is to answer the questions as fully and as helpfully as possible.
- Students are then to keep passing the drafts and the worksheets until each paper has been read and responded to by the "second reader" and the "third reader."
- First drafts and completed worksheets are then returned to their owners.
- Taking note of peer comments, each student begins to write a second draft in class.
- All papers are attached to previous drafts and filed in the student's folder.

General Revision Worksheet

WRITER'S NAME: ______________________ DATE: __________

TOPIC: ______________________

	First Reader's Name:	Second Reader's Name:	Third Reader's Name:
1. What part is most interesting? Why?			
2. Is any part confusing? Which?			
3. Do ideas or events follow each other in an order that makes sense? Are they logical?			
4. Is there enough detail? If not, where should the writer add detail?			
5. Are illustrations or examples needed to back up statement or opinion? Where?			
6. Should any sentence be omitted? Which one(s)?			
7. Is the opening interesting? Is there a better way to begin?			
8. Is there a better way to end?			

Checklists of Questions for Revision

For Narrative Writing

_____ ☐ Is the opening a good one?

_____ ☐ Is a logical sequence of events maintained?

_____ ☐ Does the story build to climax?

_____ ☐ Is the ending effective?

_____ ☐ Are the characters believable?

_____ ☐ Is the setting appropriate?

_____ ☐ Is any part confusing?

_____ ☐ Should any section or sentence be omitted?

_____ ☐ Are the details sufficient and vivid?

_____ ☐ Are any words or phrases too vague or too general? Are there any over-used expressions in the story?

_____ ☐ Is dialogue used effectively?

_____ ☐ Should the sentence patterns be more varied?

For Descriptive Writing

_____ ☐ Is the purpose or focus of the composition clear?

_____ ☐ Is the order (spatial or other) in which details are presented clear enough so that it helps the reader to follow along? Some samples of order might be: top to bottom; east to west; outside to inside; large to small; prominent to obscure; major to minor; and the like.

_____ ☐ Which details, contrasts and comparisons should be added to help readers see, hear, taste, smell, feel?

_____ ☐ Which words are too vague or general?

_____ ☐ Are there any over-used contrasts and comparisons employed?

_____ ☐ Is any part confusing?

_____ ☐ Is there a sentence or section that should be omitted?

_____ ☐ Is the ending a good one?

For Expository Writing

— — — — ☐ Is the writer's purpose made clear at the beginning?

— — — — ☐ Are statements or opinions backed up by facts, examples and illustrations?

— — — — ☐ Do ideas follow each other in an order that makes sense?

— — — — ☐ Are the sources of information given?

— — — — ☐ Are any absolute terms (**all, never, always, everyone, nobody**) used inappropriately?

— — — — ☐ Are any undue appeals made to the emotions through the use of loaded words or other devices?

— — — — ☐ Are transition words or phrases **(first, then, next, in conclusion)** used to help the reader? Any needed? Where?

— — — — ☐ Is any part confusing?

— — — — ☐ Is there any sentence or section that should be omitted?

— — — — ☐ Is the ending a good one?

For Argumentative or Persuasive Writing

— — — — ☐ Is writer's purpose made clear at beginning?

— — — — ☐ Is sufficient information provided so that the situation is clear?

— — — — ☐ Are sources of information given?

— — — — ☐ Are statements and opinions backed up by reasoning, facts, examples, illustrations, and the like?

— — — — ☐ Do ideas and sections follow each other in an order that makes sense?

— — — — ☐ Are transition words or phrases (**first, however, on the other hand, finally**) used to help the reader? Any needed? Where?

— — — — ☐ Are undue appeals made to the reader through the use of emotion-laden words, card-stacking and the other propagandistic devices?

— — — — ☐ Is inappropriate use made of absolute terms (**all, none, always, never, everyone, nobody,** and the like)?

— — — — ☐ Is any part confusing?

— — — — ☐ Does ending pull things together for the reader? Is author's purpose touched upon again in some way?

EDITING AND PROOFREADING

The most effective time for teaching usage and mechanical conventions is after a student writes, not before. Editing and proofreading sessions should follow every writing assignment, short or long. It is during these times that the focus should be on "correctness."

In all instances, the writing should be reread, if possibly aloud, by the student or a peer. During this time, editing tools should be available: a soft lead pencil, scissors, paste, dictionary, thesaurus, stylebook, grammar handbook, reference books, and possibly a checklist of errors of which to take particular note. A simplified list of editing symbols is also useful to make the chore of correcting more pleasant. (See p. 97.)

These editing and proofreading sessions will eliminate perhaps 75 percent of the errors customarily made on student papers. The other errors are those for which class, group, or individual time must be spent – not on rote drill exercises, but on examples taken from the student papers.

The recommended procedure is to present the sentences containing the error, and thus teach from the students' own writing. (The teacher may do this by writing the sentences on a chalkboard or by putting them on a spirit master for reproduction or by writing them on an overhead projector sheet.)

This should be followed by distribution of individual unmarked papers on which, using an error checklist, the student corrects his/her own work. The paper is then traded with a classmate's, so that students can serve as editors for one another. The teacher, of course, serves as senior editor to whom the junior editors refer if dictionary, thesaurus, style manual, error checklist do not supply an answer.

For the few students for whom a particular problem persists in subsequent papers, peer editors or the teacher should be alerted and involved in helping the student edit for the error *before* the paper is submitted as complete.

In some instances, additional teaching and activities to establish new language patterns may be beneficial. Least effective are those "canned" exercises available in grammar books. (See Chapter 6, pp. 105-127.)

TABLE OF EDITING SYMBOLS*

SYMBOLS	HOW THEY ARE USED	WHAT THEY MEAN
≡	michigan ≡	Capitalize
S̸	the S̸enator	Small letter
$\overset{k}{\wedge}$	picn$\overset{k}{\wedge}$icing	Insert letter or word
∼	He going was	Transpose words
¶	today. ¶ Tomorrow he	New Paragraph
L	⌊John told him	Indent for paragraph
⌢	He was ~~not~~ aware	Delete and close up
Stet	Stet He ~~was not~~ unaware	Let it stand
∽	Feature ends. Bring it OR	No new paragraph
No¶	Feature ends. No¶ Bring it.	No new paragraph
∫	beside∫her	leave space

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*Unlike the traditional overused symbols relied on by many teachers to indicate to the student that a correction is needed (*e.g., sp* or *k*), these symbols are those used by editors in the actual editing and correcting processes.

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Editing and Proofreading Lesson 1

Aim:

To edit and proofread a sample composition

Development:

1. Distribute copies of a student composition, *e.g.*, "An Event that Changed My Life." (See pp. 170-171.)

2. Have volunteer read composition aloud and elicit student reactions: "Was this interesting? What did you especially like about it? Was the ending satisfying?" Help students see that you and they, as readers and critics, were *primarily* interested in the piece's content.

3. Ask students if the paper is ready for publication. "Why not? Does it need any correction? Can you spot a specific error or two?"

   Write "editing" and "proofreading" on the board, and elicit definitions from the class. (Editing is concerned with correcting. Proofreading is concerned with making sure a typed or handwritten copy of an author's work is identical with the edited original. Proofreading is the final reading for inadvertent errors.)

4. Give out copies of the "Table of Editing Symbols." Inform students that this is an abbreviated list of symbols used by professional writers as a shortcut, to save time during editing.

5. Work through all or part of the composition with the class: the students will make corrections on their copies while you do the same on the chalkboard or projected copy, using the symbols.

   Have students spot errors and make suggestions for correcting them.

6. At one point, you might have students work in pairs on an assigned section (*e.g.*, next paragraph, or the rest of the first page): then share results with the rest of the class.

Editing and Proofreading Lesson 2

Aim: To learn the technique of editing and proofreading.

Development:

1. It may be helpful to suggest a "plan of attack" for editing papers. Working with a partner, the student first makes corrections of careless errors of omission and repetition. For example, a student may have written:

   I was going to swimming . . .

   omitting the word "go." Or a student may have written:

   I ran ran up the hill . . .

   repeating the word "ran" unwittingly. Such errors are common and easily corrected.

   I was going to ^go *swimming . . .*

   I ran ~~ran~~ up the hill . . .

2. The student next makes corrections of careless errors, such as forgetting to capitalize names of people, places or things, or the personal pronoun "I." The pupils may also correct any random capitalization they may have used in their writing.

3. Editing for variety of sentence structure will follow. Edit first for overuse of proper nouns instead of pronouns. A student's writing may look like the following:

   John is my best friend. John plays ball with me. John is nine years old. I like to play with John.

   Have the students replace some proper names with pronouns. Tell them to alternate between proper name and pronoun. A corrected paper would read:

   John *is my best friend.* **He** *plays ball with me.* **John** *is nine years old. I like to play with* **him.**

4. Have students edit for overuse of "and" as a connecting word. Have them replace "and's" with a comma if they are telling a lot of things that one person is doing. For example:

   Tony plays basketball, runs track, does gymnastics, and swims.

Have students see if the word "because" could replace any "and's" to better express a cause-effect relationship.

The robber got into the house and I got scared.

Because *the robber got in, I got scared.*

Editing and Proofreading Lesson 3

(for more advanced students)

Aim:

To learn the techniques of editing and proofreading

Development:

Whom does the pronoun refer to, John or David?

It may be helpful to suggest "a plan of attack" for editing papers.

Whether with a partner or in a group or alone, the student reads the paper through once in its entirety. Then he/she rereads, stopping to question anything that is not clear.

Who does the pronoun refer to, John or David?

Is the hair or the ribbon green?

- Are there obvious errors of omission or repetition?
- Did the writer forget to capitalize the personal pronoun "I," or the names of people, places or things? Did he or she use capitals in the middle of a word?
- Are there too many "and's"? Can they be replaced with commas, with periods, with "because?"
- Are there places where two sentences might sound better as one?

Editing and Proofreading Lesson 4

Aim:

To apply techniques of editing and proofreading

Development:

1. Have available dictionaries, thesauruses, handbooks, style manuals, grammars, chart of editing symbols.

2. Distribute a checklist of areas of particular concern, *e.g.*, subject-verb agreement, use of passive voice, parallel structure, etc., depending on the nature of the writing and the sophistication of the students.

3. Have students take second drafts from their folders and begin to read their own work, aloud if possible. After a few days, students often view their own work more objectively and catch many of their own "careless" errors.

4. Use a or b alternately:

   a. After allowing five minutes for students to read their own work and make modifications, each student exchanges papers with a classmate. Following the reading, the pair confer on each of the papers.

   b. Students break up into groups to edit and proofread each other's papers. Sometimes it might be advisable for the youngsters to make corrections on a separate sheet.

5. The group sessions may be made more interesting if students are encouraged to role play working at an editors' or proofreaders' roundtable session. For example, have the group select an editor-in-chief, and have all other group members act as assistant editors, each of whom will assume the role of an expert for correcting a particular type of error. The chief editor sees to it that every editor reads each of the papers in the group and checks for a particular item.

CHART OF INCENTIVES

Publication

Anthology:	*Magazine:*	*Newspaper:*	*Yearbook:*	*Outside Publications:*
-classroom	-classroom	-classroom	-schoolwide	-local papers—letters of opinion
-department	-department	-department		-various journals—magazine articles
-schoolwide	-schoolwide	-schoolwide		
-individual				

Posting

Bulletin and Display Board:

- -classroom
- -hall
- -English office

Contests

Schoolwide

New York City Board of Education (prose, poetry)

Locally sponsored (Chamber of Commerce, N.Y.C. Fire Department, Community School District.

State and national

Media

Dramatizations
Special Reports
Poetry Readings:
  -for class
  -for other groups
  -for parents' visits
  -for visitors to school's film festival

Tape recording
Films
Videotapes
Scripts for school's "radio station"
Scripts for outside broadcasters (Local radio or television stations

Presentations

May be a copy or an original of student work chosen by the class or by a single contributor and presented to:

The school library
A favorite teacher
School principal
Admired artist (*e.g.,* pop singer)
Local superintendent

Local personality (*e.g.,* community leader)
Grade counselor
PTA president
Relative or friend

Other Reasons

To develop a portfolio of "finished" writings for one's own satisfaction.

To prepare reports and other written work in other subject areas.

To practice for examination purposes (midterms, finals, Regents, college entrance, etc.).

Practice for developing sense of writing processes (possible career in writing).

Preparation of book reviews for class and/or library bulletin or special reference file.

Preparation of review (for posting or through other means of circulation) of films, recordings, plays, and television fare.

Writing stories for younger siblings.

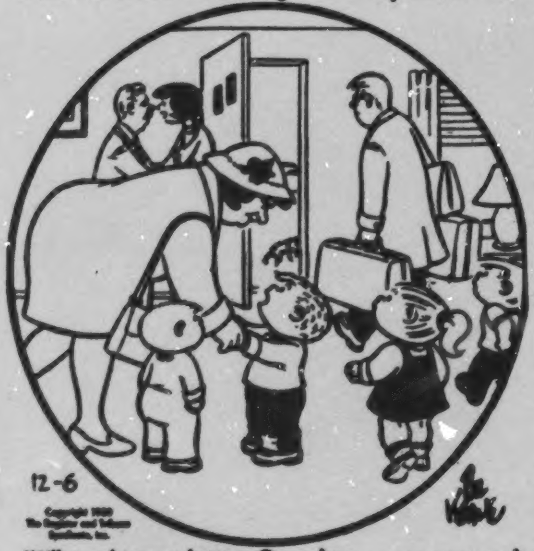
Writing stories for younger classes.

Creating anthologies for an exchange program with other classes or other schools.

Letter Recipients

Classmates who are ill
Pen pals
Admired personalities (writers, sports heroes)
Relatives
Friends
Editors
Prospective employers
Dispensers of information (U.S. Office of Education)

THE FAMILY CIRCUS. **By Bil Keane**



"I'll send you a letter, Grandma — as soon as I learn to write."

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6. Grammar, Sentence Sense, and Mechanics

Grammar

Through the smoke surrounding the battles over the teaching of grammar and the study of the way language is used – these points emerge. Instruction in grammar as part of a program to improve writing must be an outgrowth of observed student need and must be aimed at overcoming very specific problems with priorities based on their importance to the particular student's ability to communicate.

Time spent on theories of grammar, exercises identifying parts of speech, tenses and moods, or on canned workbook lessons on usage certainly does not improve writing.*

The teaching of grammar or usage should follow student writing and teacher diagnosis – and then be integrated with editing and proofreading. The major function of such instruction in a writing program is to provide the students with practical strategies for checking their own writing – to help students learn how to edit their own work. (See pp. 96-103.)

The workbooks available to the teacher should not be permitted to dictate the curriculum. Group lessons are taught and practice assigned only as warranted by the group's needs. Otherwise, instruction should be aimed only at those who need it, with the reasons for grammatical errors considered in the design of instruction. The same mistake may indicate carelessness in one writer but reflect variant usage in another. The first student will require application of proofreading skills; the other will need grammatical explanation, and possibly practice exercises *at the appropriate level of sophistication.*

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*"The teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing." Richard Braddock, Richard Lloyd-Jones and Lowell Schoer, *Research in Written Composition*, National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Ill.: 1963, pp. 37-38.

Usage

Instruction should go no deeper than it must for students to cope with the error. A student who writes "we was" or "he run" will not profit from pages of exercises on subject-verb agreement or on past tense. Student attention can be focused through an explanation of the standard usage; through practice on the isolated item (ideally with samples from student writing); and through the development of a mnemonic chart or diagram for reference during editing and proofreading. The achievement of mastery will be demonstrated not on a short-answer test but in the improvement of writing.

It is the contention of many that older students do not learn formal English in the same way they learned their mother tongue; that although speech comes before writing, writing need not be bound by the competencies of speech; that certain forms of correction can become part of a person's writing competency without necessarily being incorporated in his or her speech.*

However, because one's language community sets one's language patterns over a long period of development, altering language is a slow process and involves a change of language community. Besides giving explicit instructions on "mistakes," the teacher has the additional responsibility of presenting a model of informal standard usage. Rather than adopt the student's usage, the teacher must call attention to usage appropriate for particular situations and teach the distinctions between oral and written language. This must be done without embarrassing the student.

The following activities are designed to modify language usage by developing awareness of various levels and by giving models of standard usage.†

1. Students listen and follow the text as examples of good writing are read aloud by teacher or peers, or played on a tape recorder. (For secondary as well as elementary students.)
2. Students participate in choral reading.
3. Students read aloud standard texts. (Such plays as *Raisin in the Sun* use language on several levels.)
4. Students role play speakers of standard dialect (imitate teacher, employer, etc.) in realistic situations.

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* Mina P. Shaughnessy, *Errors and Expectations*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

†Adapted from James Moffett and Betty Jane Wagner, *Student Centered Language Arts and Reading K-13. A Handbook for Teachers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

Sentence Sense

No doubt all teachers of composition have at some point been tempted to fantasize the coming of a fairy godmother whose magic wand would at once eliminate run-on sentences, banish inappropriate fragments, and cause only perfectly constructed sentences to issue from the pens of their students. Mere analysis of sentences will not develop sentence sense; nor will the study of formal grammar produce it. Probably the student for whom sentence sense is a problem will benefit most from extensive practice in sentence construction.

The Complete Sentence

The basic sentence sense problems of students have customarily been attacked three ways, two of which have extremely limited value in the improvement of writing. One approach seems to confront the problem directly, namely teaching what a complete sentence is. The student is taught that the completeness of a sentence can be tested by five criteria: subject, predicate, complete thought, initial capital letter, and terminal punctuation. But the "complete" in "complete thought" is the same elusive element as the "sense" in "sentence sense."

Another common device is to give students practice in correcting sentences in workbooks, and the like. This kind of material is very tempting for the teacher. Unfortunately, the central problem with this technique is that it relies on the students' analysis of sentences that are not their own, and the correction of mistakes they have not made themselves.

The third traditional approach is probably the most helpful, if done properly. This involves correcting the sentence sense errors in the student's own writing. However, merely to write "frag." or "run on" is to waste effort. The student learns best through his/her own doing and not from the teacher's labelling.

If a student writes the following:

I saw him going down the road. As far as his legs would carry him.

the teacher should encircle it with the comment, "Rewrite as one sentence."

Other Approaches

More recently dictation, sentence expansion, and sentence combining have proved useful.

Dictation

Many of the written errors that seem to indicate a lack of familiarity with what constitutes a sentence are really nothing more than punctuation problems. Diagnosis of these problems and their remediation are best undertaken through the use of dictation. Dictation is a useful technique for developing sentence sense in those students who ramble on or punctuate erratically.

Select an effective passage for dictation which will consider the reading level of your group but give even more weight to the interest level. This may be a section of a story the students are reading.

The passage read can also serve as a model to demonstrate a particular writing technique you have taught, such as use of physical detail or parallel structure.

To begin, type the paragraph, eliminating all beginning capitals and end punctuation. Hand out a copy to each of the students who need to improve their sentence sense. Ask the students to capitalize and punctuate as you dictate. Your *intonation* should be the guide to the students so that they know when and how to end the sentence, and when to capitalize to indicate the beginning of a new sentence.

If your students are more advanced, you can use a more complete dictation in which the student has to write every word. Since dictation is unfamiliar within the context of many English classrooms, you need to prepare your students fully *before* you begin to dictate.

Sentence Problems

The two most common and most serious types of sentence errors are:

1. writing part of a sentence as a whole sentence (fragment) and
2. writing two or more sentences as if they were all a single sentence (the run-on sentence).

Two excellent ways of developing sentence sense to reduce or eliminate these errors are **sentence expansion** and **sentence combining.**

Sentence Expansion

Sentence expansion is a device whereby the student begins with a kernel sentence and enlarges upon it in accordance with the instructions of the teacher. This kind of exercise enables students to employ their own extensive knowledge of the structure of the language, and provides them with systematic and guided practice in the creation of sentences which are, in large measure, their own. An example of sentence expansion follows:

Kernel: *The people ate.*

Direction 1. Expand to show the occupations of the people.

Possible answer:

The judges and lawyers ate.

Direction 2. Expand to show how the people ate.

Possible answer:

The judges and lawyers ate slowly.

Direction 3. Expand to show why they ate that way.

Possible answer:

The judges and lawyers ate slowly because they were not in a hurry to get back to work.

Direction 4. Expand to show what the people did yesterday.

Possible answer:

The judges and lawyers, who took only twenty minutes for lunch yesterday, ate slowly today because they were not in a hurry to get back to work.

Direction 5. Expand to show why the people did what they did yesterday.

Possible answer:

The judges and lawyers, who yesterday took only twenty minutes for lunch because of the importance of the case, ate slowly today because they were not in a hurry to get back to work.

Performed in pairs or groups, as well as with the help of the teacher, sentence expansion can make the student familiar with the real "boundaries" of the sentence. (See p. 159, "I Hate," for student examples.) For the full value of the exercise to be realized, there must be some kind of monitoring process built in so that errors do not go unchecked and create new errors. Do keep in mind the difference between these game sentences and real efforts to communicate. Sometimes the fun of expansion results in prose that is neither graceful nor clear.

SENTENCE EXPANSION GAMES

Sentence expansion lends itself to game-playing devices. For example, **Expansion Relay** calls for six groups of five/six students each. All students receive a copy of the same expansion exercise with six directions. The first student of each team rushes to complete the first directive on his/her team's assigned place at the board and hands his/her team's piece of chalk to the following teammate who'll complete the second directive, based on what the first team member has written, etc. The members of the last team to finish are dubbed "fragments."

Introducing expansion to a class can be fun. The teacher writes "Paul called" on the center of the chalkboard and summons each member of the class to add to the sentence. When

> *Tall Paul, who is often very angry with his parents, called his Uncle Frank and his Aunt Kate to see if he could stay with them during the summer months*

stretches across the board, students have probably acquired the knack of expansion technique.

EXPANSION WITH GUIDE WORDS

For students who catch on slowly or for whom practice with a particular structure is needed, clue words may be desirable.

Kernel 1: *The girl won.*

Direction 1. *Expand to show how the girl won.* (by)
Direction 2. *Expand to tell which girl won.* (who)
Direction 3. *Expand to tell when the girl won.* (at)
Direction 4. *Expand to tell what the girl won.* (what)

Possible final answer:

> *At ten o'clock this morning the girl who had practiced hard won the first-place trophy by running much faster than her nearest competitors.*

Younger or less mature students may begin by creating a "stand-up" sentence. A student is given the initial kernel sentence and stands in front of the class with the words on a card. Students volunteer to add phrases, clauses, and the like, writing the words on large paper and coming up in front of the room to extend the sentence around the room.

Sentence Combining

Because the possible answers are fewer and more predictable, sentence combining is useful for practice in working with larger structures and in handling pronoun-antecedent relationships through a long sentence. The premise is simple. Students are given two or more short, related complete sentences and asked to combine them into longer, complete, correct sentences. Doing this helps develop an understanding and fluency in the use of subordination and coordination to show relationships such as sequence, cause-effect, and so on. Individual or small-group work on sentence combining will come after explanations and group practice. How much explaining will be necessary depends on how hard the exercise will be for the group.

As students advance they should be given harder sentences to combine without guide words or suggestions. Indeed, such an exercise provides an excellent diagnostic instrument to measure growth in mature writing habits. Students who link all the items with *and* or *and so,* who use coordination rather than subordination, even when stringy, sing-song sentences result, still need guide words or clues in their combining. Frank O'Hare's *Sentencecraft* gives students very explicit guides with most items in a program of exposing students to various structures. *Sentence Combining* by William Strong provides sequences of items to be combined which are centered about topics such as "Morning Shower," "Fish Story," and "How Whites Look to Blacks." Strong does not provide elaborate guide words or systems, leaving the combining technique to the composer. The repetition throughout the items of subject and object words gives the student practice in using an appropriate pronoun for subject or object word substitution.

Here are some examples:

1. *Frank stood at the edge of the board.* (,)
   Frank took a deep breath. (, and)
   Frank tensed each muscle.
   Frank sprang high in the air. (,)
   Frank pointed downward. (, and)
   Frank shot into the water below.

Here the primary purpose is to inculcate the use of a single subject with a series of verbs set off by commas and **and**. Incidentally the student should be developing mature writing habits by dropping the repeated subject word.

2. *Mother smiled.*
   I passed everything. (because)

3. *The audience booed violently.*
   The villain came on stage. (when)

Items such as 2 and 3, with their exact instructions and rigidly predictable outcomes, are useful for the practice of specific structures.

4. Here is an exercise which can be made hard or easy, as the class needs:

   a. *A building was on fire.*
   b. *Flames shot up through the roof.*
   c. *The building was abandoned.*
   d. *A man was walking his dog.*
   e. *He saw the fire.*
   f. *He ran to the alarm box.*
   g. *He called the fire department.*
   h. *Five minutes passed.*
   i. *There was a loud wail of sirens.*
   j. *Trucks and firemen filled the street.*

The easiest assignment is to put sentences **a** through **d** into one sentence; **e** through **g** in a second; and **h** through **j** in a third. The next step will be to make the three sentences into two. The hardest task (really quite demanding) would be to put all the essentials into one sentence. It can be made still more demanding if the short sentences to be combined are listed out of order and the students have to arrange them sequentially first and then rewrite them.

Sentence combining may also provide a vehicle for emulation, as in this example.*

The tavern was barnlike.
It had a bar. (with)
The bar was short.
The bar was blunt.
A few men dawdled. (at which)
A few men had inexpressive faces. (with)

One of the great virtues of sentence combining is its adaptability to the level at which the student is currently writing. Exercises can be planned to practice the particular kinds of combinations in which students need practice. It's fun to do, and it remains fun while it teaches. The teacher just has to make sure that the exercises are purposeful as well as enjoyable.

**Bernard Malamud's original sentence as quoted by O'Hare, p. 123, reads: "The tavern was barnlike, with a short blunt bar at which a few men with inexpressive faces dawdled."*

Sentence Variety

While repetition has a clearcut function in emphasizing and indicating relationship, the ability to vary sentence length and structure gives a writer options that can make the writing both clearer and more interesting.

Much student writing owes its uninspired flavor to the monotonous regularity of sentence length and construction. Teacher and peers can help by pointing out occasions for improvement in specific pieces of student writing. However, students may benefit more from the writing of sentences of varied types focusing on purpose rather than on grammatical form. The student can be encouraged to shift the stress from "who" or "what" to "where" or "when" or "why" or "how."

No newspaper will be published on Monday, May 30, because Memorial Day is a school holiday.

why: *Because Memorial Day is a school holiday, no newspaper will be published on Monday, May 30.*

Hugh Jenkins received last night the trophy awarded annually to the year's outstanding basketball player.

what: *The trophy awarded annually to the year's outstanding basketball player was received by Hugh Jenkins last night.*

The intruder bowed to the group and stalked off before David could say a word.

when: *Before David could say a word, the intruder bowed to the group – and stalked off.*

Jim Davis hobbled to the finish line, last but triumphant.

how: *Exhausted and lamed, last but undefeated, Jim Davis hobbled to the finish line.*

He managed during the next difficult weeks. His friends and neighbors made sure he was never without food.

how: *With the help of friends and neighbors who made sure he was never without food, he managed during the next difficult weeks.*

He couldn't see anything but he could hear everything from his hiding place behind the drapes.

where: *Hiding behind the drapes, he couldn't see anything but he could hear everything.*

Application

The true measure of the success of exercises in sentence combining, sentence expansion, and the like, of course, is improvement seen in the youngsters' writing. We are all too familiar with students who are crackerjacks at isolated exercises, but do not show a transfer of skill to their normal written work.

In every instance possible, application should be made to student writing. A student paragraph can be written on the board or duplicated for the class to use in applying the particular techniques practiced. The students are then referred to the day's journal entry, for instance, for individual application.

One teacher regularly reproduced for class discussion three types of sentences selected from unidentified student papers: good examples; sentences that could be improved; and hopeless sentences.*

TRANSITIONS

One characteristic frequently noticed in the prose of inexperienced writers is the abrupt movement from one thought to another. This jarring effect may distract readers and sometimes create a puzzle they cannot solve. The teacher who notes such a need for linking devices by writing "trans. needed" does little to help solve the problem.

Students have to learn not only appropriate transitional words and phrases, but also the use of repetition and parallel structure as important linking devices.

The customary store of "transition words" makes for artificial and pretentious writing with transition words being overused unless used with understanding and discretion.

Practice with samples such as these may make for more natural writing:

1. *I couldn't go fishing. It rained.*

   Combine with the following transitional words according to what you want to say: ***until, unless, as, even though, because*.**

2. Make a logical paragraph out of the following sentences by arranging the ideas in logical order and combining some of these very short sentences through the use of appropriate transition words.

   This book is dumb. A chemist can't detect arsenic in a cup of coffee. I like to read mysteries. Some mysteries are disappointing. I read all the mysteries I can.

---

* **Presented at a WEDGE workshop on writing by teacher Lenore Woodman, Columbia Teachers College, summer 1978.**

Mechanics

Punctuation

Written English needs punctuation as a substitute for intonation, pause, and other vocal devices that help clarify meaning. Punctuation is essentially a set of signals showing how to read the flow of words as the speaker would say them.

For the beginning writing student, the emphasis in punctuation, as in most other technical facets of writing, must be on correct usage of the most common punctuation signals, and the elimination of common errors. You may have to start by clearing up student confusion about the names and uses of the most common marks.

Terminal Punctuation Marks

The most serious mishandling usually occurs with the terminal punctuation marks: the period, the exclamation mark, and the question mark. The key problem here is the student's misconception of where one sentence is to end and the next to begin. When the student misplaces marks, this is essentially a sentence sense problem, and the placing of those marks should improve as the student's feel for the integrity of the sentence grows. (See the section on "Sentence Sense," p. 107.)

When terminal marks are omitted out of carelessness, proofreading will eliminate most of the problem. It is sometimes helpful for students to read their own papers aloud so that they can use oral clues to determine where punctuation belongs.

For those students who use the comma to splice together two sentences, introduce (or re-introduce) the semicolon as one of the coordinating devices.

The Comma

Student problems with the comma are usually sins of omission rather than commission, with the exception of the use of the comma as a period. (See the section above on terminal punctuation.)

To get students actively involved in using commas, the teacher distributes copies of a prepared passage correct in all respects but lacking those commas that correspond to several observed student trouble spots. A typical passage might have several instances of items in series, coordinating conjunctions joining main clauses, direct address, parenthetical words such as **therefore**, and non-restrictive phrases and clauses (best identified to the students as "unimportant" words and phrases). As the teacher reads the passage aloud using intonation and pauses to suggest comma placement, students insert commas. Then groups convene to agree on a common version which is then submitted to the class as a whole. The idea here is that youngsters are made to focus on the use of the comma in the give-and-take of group analysis, both in the small-group meetings and later during the class examination of the passage. Therefore, the teacher should be in no hurry to answer questions and provide dispute-settling right answers. The class discussion and final decision on the placement of the commas is to be a discovery situation where students become aware of the reasons for the placement of each comma.

The Apostrophe

Our primary concern with the apostrophe (gradually becoming more and more obsolete) is its use when it is not warranted. Some beginning writers throw in an apostrophe before or after almost every terminal "s."

Possibly the best advice we can give is: When in doubt, throw it out.

Students are most likely to need apostrophes in their own writing to indicate a contraction or possession. Many bilingual and dialect speakers experience interference from a variant way of expressing possession. Carelessness accounts for some misplaced and omitted apostrophes but for others, even at the secondary level, instruction and practice will be needed. The student might prepare a reference chart or guide sheet and add the item to a personal proofreading checklist.

Quotation Marks

Dictation can be one way of teaching and testing the appropriate use of quotation marks. It offers a chance to use dramatic examples and to train students in recognizing occasions which call for the use of quotation marks to indicate direct quotes, the most important places where these marks should be used.

Students tend to overuse quotation marks for emphasis and as excuses for usages which they are not sure are acceptable. They should be encouraged to avoid this abuse.

Many students are insecure about the difference between direct and indirect quotation and need practice in determining the appropriate pronoun and verb tense as well as when to use quotation marks. This is best taught, or retaught, as the need arises with samples from student papers. News and feature stories in the daily newspapers can supplement student writing with fresh and interesting material.

Capitalization

Since we are not primarily concerned with producing grammarians or great scholars, the *key* capitalization errors observed in student writing provide the focus while lesser errors take a back seat. Of course, draw attention to lack of a capital at the beginning of a sentence or in the personal pronoun "I." Random capitalization of common nouns should be corrected. It often comes from a lack of knowledge of the correct upper and lower-case forms. A wall chart for reference may be useful. (See "Handwriting," pp. 119-121.)

Let the student know that in some instances capitalization is a matter of adopting a particular style and remaining consistent. Clear up any confusion stemming from differences with various foreign languages. Spanish and French, for instance, do not capitalize proper adjectives.

One method of teaching generalized rules might be a class project of a one-page style sheet, modeled on one used by a major newspaper or press association or by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association.

In any case, students can be taught to refer to a stylebook or handbook. You might mount a wall chart for student use and/or issue a reference sheet for use by individuals as they proofread their own work. If practice is needed, you might duplicate two copies of a student paper, one of which you have corrected. Give both an uncorrected and a correct copy to students. Their job is to *proofread* – correct the uncorrected paper by comparing it with the correct paper.

As a later exercise, students edit their papers and make corrections (without the aid of the correct paper), and compare with a correct paper afterward.

Spelling

The key to improvement in this area is the recognition by the student of the value of correct spelling. Basic motivation is "publication" of student work, writing real letters to be mailed, posting on class bulletin boards, inclusion in a school newsletter, etc. A critical reader, whether it is an employer or a peer, can best stimulate interest in the student writer.

The most important strategy one can use in the classroom is to provide an editing and proofreading session following every writing session. During this time, dictionaries, thesauruses, stylebooks, etc. are available and students may use one another and the teacher as resources.

It may be necessary to demonstrate the use of the editing aids to some students, and at first many may need encouragement in viewing them as handy tools. Although these aids should be available at all stages of student writing, the stress upon correct spelling should come during the editing and proofreading stage. It must not be allowed to interfere with the writing impulse. If a specific writing assignment necessitates the use of particular words, the preteaching of spelling or vocabulary may be helpful. In special cases (such as students of English as a Second Language and those with severe retardation in reading), the teacher may serve as a "talking dictionary" so that mechanical difficulties do not impede the development of the student's writing. Some students may prefer to underline or encircle words they are not sure how to spell and look them up later.

After the revised paper is turned in for evaluation or duplication, it is more helpful to the weaker speller for the teacher to supply the correct spelling than to write *"sp"* or *"Look up*

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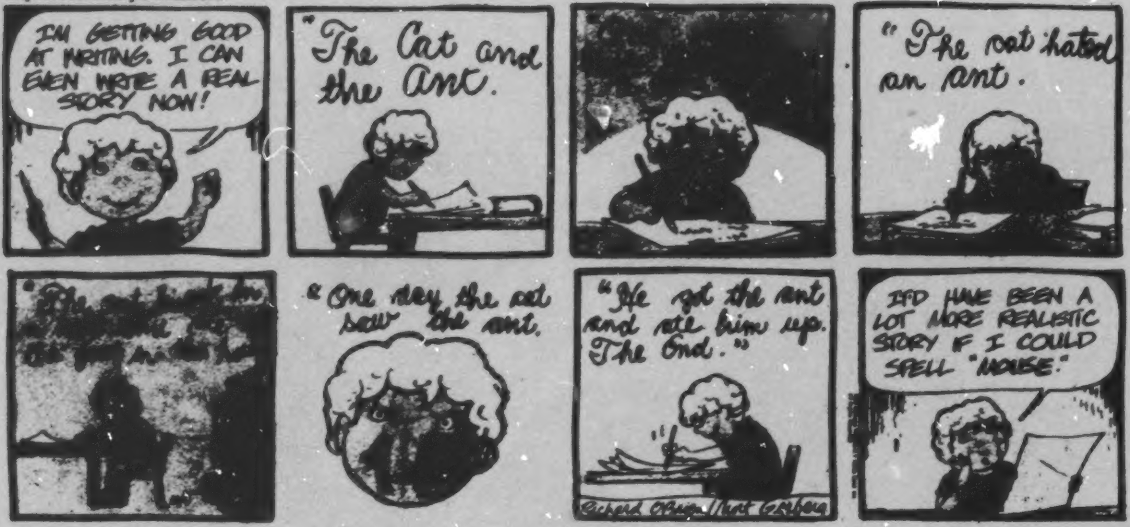
I'M GETTING GOOD AT WRITING. I CAN EVEN WRITE A REAL STORY NOW!
"The Cat and the Ant.
"The rat hated an ant.
"One day the rat saw the ant.
"He got the ant and ate him up. The End."
IT'D HAVE BEEN A LOT MORE REALISTIC STORY IF I COULD SPELL "MOUSE."
Richard O'Brien / Mort Gerberg

spelling." These misspelled words should form an ongoing personal list. If the words are kept in a filebox, it will be easier for the teacher and student to analyze and cluster them to determine the particular kinds of errors the student has been making and to choose the remediation that will be most effective.

It may soon be apparent that individual spelling errors can be grouped and tackled by learning a particular generalization or study technique.

Student miswritings stem from:

a. attitude or motivation
b. lack of visual focus or discrimination
c. auditory problems and/or ignorance of sound-symbol relationship
d. use of phonetic spelling when it doesn't apply
e. word confusion
f. variant usage or syntax
g. handwriting difficulties

In general, small doses of spelling work with frequent reviews are better than massive assaults on lists. The student's own personal spelling checklist for use in proofreading can be an important tool. The student, after all, must be made to realize that spelling is important not so that lists may be mastered or for use in spelling bees, but for real improvement in the readability of his or her written work. The chart on pp. 122-125 may give guidance on specific remedial activities.

Elementary school teachers are advised to tie spelling to writing from the beginning. Asking a child to spell words orally is not conducive to learning to spell.*

Frank Smith makes a case against using spelling lists. "The thousands of words that most of us can spell were not learned ten at a time from lists in our workbooks, but as a consequence of meaningful writing. Just as we learn to recognize words and their meaning through reading them, so we learn to spell words and to use them meaningfully through writing."

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* John M. Kean and Carl Personke, *The Language Arts: Teaching and Learning in the Elementary Schools* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976).

Handwriting

Communication is blocked and students experience real frustration when their writing is illegible. Sometimes illegible handwriting is a screen used by the insecure writer to "hide" from the reader. In such cases, the handwriting often improves as the fear of writing lessens.

Many pupils would like help in overcoming handwriting problems, yet are reluctant to ask for or be seen getting "penmanship" lessons. And many upper elementary and secondary school teachers feel unprepared to offer such help. Some of the following are suggestions which even such reluctant students might appreciate:

1. Post wall charts and suggest that students pick out and work on those letters that give them the most trouble. Indicate that any legible approximation of a chart letter is acceptable.

2. Distribute a guide sheet and suggest that pupils use these for private reference in the classroom and at home.

3. Suggest using lined paper and experimenting with various writing utensils (soft lead as opposed to hard lead, thick ballpoint as opposed to thin felt tip).

4. Advise individuals about special problems such as leaving more space between words, closing up *a's* and *o's*, or linking *str*, and suggest a practice drill or two, possibly using the individual guide sheet for tracing.

5. Spot and work with youngsters who frequently use capital letters in the middle of words and/or who start words with capitals where none are needed. These students may not know which are the proper lower case letters, or they may have trouble forming them, or they may have developed the habit of using capital letters inappropriately. A wall chart may be useful. (See section on capitalization on p. 117.)

6. Set aside time for proofreading after every writing session.

HANDWRITING GUIDE SHEET NO. 1.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee

Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj

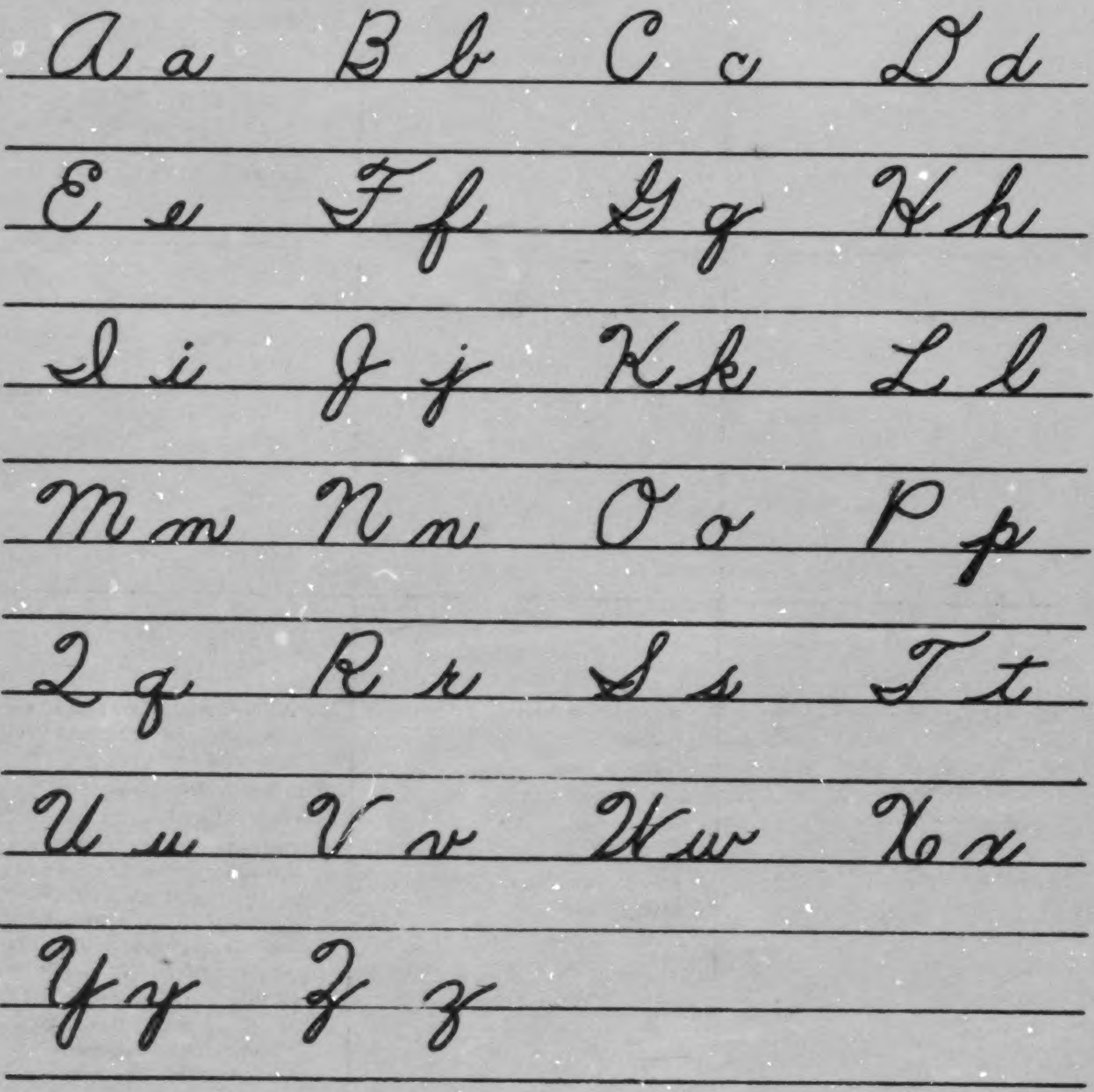
Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo

Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt

Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy

Zz

HANDWRITING GUIDE SHEET NO. 2


Aa Bb Cc Dd
Ee Ff Gg Hh
Ii Jj Kk Ll
Mm Nn Oo Pp
Qq Rr Ss Tt
Uu Vv Ww Xx
Yy Zz

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GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUALIZED REMEDIATION AND MECHANICS

Symptom	Possible Cause	Possible Remedy
Same word spelled correctly and misspelled on student's paper (s)	– lack of spelling awareness – lack of spelling motivation – too much speed in composing – failure to proofread	1. Motivate and develop awareness through "publication" (pen pal, peer reading, bulletin board, scrapbook, class magazine). 2. Instruct in skill of proofreading through groups, pairing, alone. 3. Set aside time and establish routine of proofreading after each composing and/or revising session.
Word(s) misspelled though correct spelling available in written assignment	– poor eyesight (farsighted or astigmatic) – failure to focus – lack of visual discrimination – carelessness	1. Check and refer to doctor. 2. Visual tracking (letter by letter comparison). 3. Practice copying words, phrases, sentences, followed by proofreading.
Misspelling of simple common words becaus for because docter for doctor stil for still wich for which bin for been gon for gone	– not enough reading/writing in English – failure to focus – lack of visual memory – phonetic spelling applied to non-phonetic word	1. Ask student to locate word (in newspaper or textbook) and focus on word. 2. Isolate problem area. 3. Copy on card file. 4. Memorize spelling by tracing, visualizing, writing in air, writing on paper from memory. (Word games such as crossword puzzles, Scrabble, anagrams supply kinesthetic and tactile reinforcement.) 5. All of the above plus dictation of sentences containing the problem word (by peer or cassette).

Symptom	Possible Cause	Possible Remedy
gril for girl retrop for report snigle for singles feats for feast	– reversals may be due to confusion in sequencing	1. Establish left and right margins (red and green) and an arrow pointing right. 2. Practice reading and writing for correct visual image. 3. Use crossword puzzles, Scrabble, anagrams, and other word games for tactile and kinesthetic reinforcement.
Misspelling of word when sound corresponds with its symbol hop for hope	– unaware of patterns and/or generalization	a. In vowel/consonant (it) or consonant/vowel/consonant (hat) clusters, the sound of the vowel is usually short. In consonant/vowel (no) or vowel/consonant plus silent *e*, (ate or hope) the sound of the vowel is usually long.
no for know new for knew	– lack of awareness of variety of ways same sound can be spelled in English	b. Starting with sample from student paper, lead students to discern phonetic generalization or pattern: *n* could be *n, mn, pn, kn, gn.*
dinning for dining comming for coming	– unaware of generalization	c. Teach correct patterns for adding suffix starting with a vowel.
pin for pen correck for correct aks for ask	– variation in pronunciation – dialect deviation	Demonstrate pronunciation from which spelling is derived. Isolate problem area. Give practice writing from dictation and in copying. Follow up each with immediate self-correction.
atheletic for athletic libery for library	– poor auditory memory	

Symptom	**Possible Cause**	**Possible Remedy**
Misspelling of particular spelling "demons:" recieve for receive marrage for marriage	– lack of knowledge – carelessness	1. Develop habit of underlining doubtful spellings and referring to dictionary or other resource during editing and proofreading. 2. Learn appropriate generalization. For example; "i" before "e" except after "c" or when sounded like "a," etc.; when adding a suffix starting with a vowel other than "i," change "y" to "i" in words ending in "y" preceded by a consonant. Models: marry marriage monkey monkeys marry marrying
Similar words confused an for and were for where thing for think affect for effect	– confusion of words similar in sound – faulty auditory discrimination or focus – confusion about differences in meaning	1. Point out differences in pronunciation and clarify visual differences. 2. Point out differences of meaning and usage. 3. Support with mnemonic devices.
Confusion of particular homophones: add, ad there, their, they're to, two no, know real, reel for, four whether, weather you're, your cent, sent whole, hole meet, meat	– lack of knowledge – memory failure	1. Teach differences of meaning. 2. Support with mnemonic devices: *n*o, *n*ever, *n*ada; *kn*ow, *kn*ow-how, *kn*owledge. 3. Puns/jokes "The little pig thought his father was a boar." 4. Derivations (cent – century, centipede)

Symptom	Possible Cause	Possible Remedy
Misspelling of derivatives sincerly for sincerely mispell for misspell elegible for illegible ment for meant critisize for criticize ratial for racial sine for sign bom for bomb	– failure to use structural analysis as an aid	1. Instruct on finding root and dividing into root and parts. 2. Teach generalization on adding affixes. 3. Learn families of related words mean, meaning, meant critic, critical, criticize sign, signature bomb, bombard
Misspellings that stem from syntax walk for walked use for used could of for could have walk for walks	– unfamiliarity with grammatical form – inconsistency of sound represented by the same letters, *e.g.,* walked – wawkt hugged – hugd mended – mendid – pronunciation slur; unfamiliarity with grammatical form – difference in dialect	1. Focus on problems 2. Instruct in use of meaning clues (*e.g.,* yesterday . . .) 3. Develop mnemonic devices, *e.g.,* chart for third person singular S-boy walk(s) Pl-boy(s) walk 4. Proofreading practice with checklist
Grammatical convention violated ten assistant all direction a results	– variation of grammatical conventions for marking plural nouns – ignorance of inflectional suffix that makes a word plural	Clear up confusion about affix that indicates plural.
Handwriting Apparent misspelling of words with same letter(s) ("k" looks like "le") Idiosyncratic and/or erratic capitalization, particularly in middle of word	– poor formation of particular letter(s) in particular context – ignorance and/or need for practice – handwriting problem 1. lack of awareness of differences 2. lack of practice in differentiating between capital and lower case letter(s) 3. confusion between cursive writing and manuscript 4. ignorance of appropriate use	Individualized instruction and practice in formation of confusing letter(s) 1. Teacher board writing should distinguish upper and lower case 2. Individualized instruction and practice in differentiating 3. Individual guide sheet for copying or tracing

Symptom	Possible Cause	Possible Remedy
Grammatical convention violated He no do homework.	– Bilingual confusion – Negative precedes verb in native language; *e.g.,* *Italian: Lui non fa il lavoro.* *Spanish: El no hace su tarea.*	1. Clear up confusion about placement of negative in English. 2. Provide correct patterns. 3. Use student papers as correct illustrations.
I do it tomorrow	– Use of present tense for futurity. *Spanish: Lo hago mañana.* *French: Je le fais demain.*	1. Clear up confusion by teaching use of future tense in English. 2. Establish correct English patterns: *I do it now* to *I'll do it tomorrow*
The sister of Mary is pretty.	– The possessive pattern using an apostrophe does not exist in native language; *e.g.,* *Italian: La sorella di Maria e bella.* *Spanish: La hermana de Maria es bonita.*	1. Clear up confusion by explaining the use of the apostrophe to show possession. 2. Provide possessive patterns. 3. Have student identify correct English possessive form in newspapers, magazines, or textbooks.
I wash the hands	– With parts of the body, the definite article is used instead of the possessive adjective. *French: Je me lave les mains.* *Spanish: Me lavo las manos.*	1. Clear up confusion about the parts of the body by showing the use of possessive adjective in English. 2. Provide pattern for use of the possessive adjective.
Is pretty.	– Omission of pronoun subject Some native languages incorporate pronoun in the verb form; *e.g.,* *Spanish: Es bonita.*	1. Show comparison between English usage and that of the other language spoken. 2. Teach use of pronoun subject in English. 3. Provide patterns.

Symptom	Possible Cause	Possible Remedy
I am student	– Omission of indefinite article in certain contexts is common in native language, *e.g.,* *French: Je suis étudiant*	1. Clear up confusion about use of indefinite article by showing comparison between English language use of the indefinite article and its omission in native languages. 2. Provide patterns
Idiom violated I have sixteen years	– Confusion stemming from exact translation of this construction from native language, *e.g.,* *French: J'ai seize ans.* *Spanish: Yo tengo diez y seis anos.* *Italian: Io ho sedici anni.*	Correct English idiom must be taught and reinforced.
Incorrect preposition Put the book in the table	– Confusion stemming from exact translation in English of preposition from native language, *e.g.,* *Spanish: Ponga el libro en la mesa.*	1. Show use of English preposition through demonstration and motion (*i.e.*, on the table, walk into room, under the chair, put the book in the desk.) 2. Play games demonstrating use of preposition. (Simon says: Walk *to* the window).

7. Responding, Diagnosing, and Evaluating

Responding to Writing

If the primary goal of your evaluation is to motivate more willing and more effective writing, respond to most student writing with thoughtful, non-threatening, supportive comments, whether you grade or not. Criticism that is too harsh, too frequent, and too early, can be destructive. However, extravagant, overgeneralized praise has little value and may also be harmful.

Content

Focus first on content, on what the student has tried to communicate or express. Positive comments can take the form of a restatement of what the student has said: "It is difficult to have a part-time job and be a full-time student." "You really understand your younger brother." Or express interest and encourage further communication by volunteering relevant information about yourself: "I, too, like to be alone at times."

It is sometimes helpful to write comments in the form of questions. If the student lacks content, for instance, ask a question which will provide more information: "Which school do you like better? Why?" Or "What was the first thing you noticed when you entered the disco?"

Quality of Writing

The second area of concern should be the quality of the writing – its honesty, vividness, purposefulness, clarity, power and appropriateness. Specific positive comments enable the students to duplicate whatever is good in their future papers. For example: "Your use of detail to describe the first moments of the blackout really made me see your block and feel the way you were feeling."

Organization

Then, if the student's paper lacks organization, number some of the sentences in the paper and write: "Which of these sentences go together?" "Which of these sentences should you write first? . . . last?" If the paper lacks unity, you might write: "How is this sentence related to your topic?" Limit your questions about content and organization to one or two areas.

Mechanics

Finally, attend to the mechanics and technical errors. Correct some technical errors, but not many. Too many corrections discourage students; too few communicate an unrealistic sense of perfection. Isolate a technical area that needs immediate attention because of its frequency or its importance to communication: "Work on sentence punctuation." "Avoid overusing *and*." If possible, help cluster spelling errors to determine the cause of errors and the appropriate learning strategies. These skills areas can be placed as monthly student goals on sheets that have been affixed to student folders. (See chart following p. 154.)

Occasionally the suggested order of response (content, quality of writing, organization, mechanics) may be reordered. If the striking aspect of the paper is the style, that may be the first comment, *i.e.*, "You have given an overwhelming sense of the mood of loneliness." Or if the paper is so illiterate or poorly written that it can't be read you may wish to say or write, "I am interested in what you have to say but I find it difficult to read. Please read it to me."

Obviously, not every aspect needs to be attended to in every paper. But in every paper the student should be aware that the teacher is interested in what he or she has to say and is responding as in a two-way conversation. Lengthy comments are not always possible. But try to make more than superficial comments when possible, especially on papers written early in the term, to set up a climate of mutual exchange.

You might be interested in this recollection of her high school teacher by a professional writer.

> *As a sophomore in high school, I was lucky enough to be assigned a teacher who loved good writing. The entire class soon wanted to become authors. And she made us feel we* could, *through her enthusiasm and through her unique system of grading our efforts. Our themes and short stories were graded in "parts," rather than as wholes. A paragraph of graphic description, a deft characterization, an original plot or a fresh, stimulating simile might rate an A. Thus there was no room for the easy discouragement that so often makes a new writer stop writing completely. We wrote good paragraphs and dreamed confidently of developing toward the good play or the good novel.* *

---

* From Maureen Daly, *Sixteen and Other Stories* (New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1972) from the preface.

Diagnosis

The same writing that calls for supportive response may also begin to provide insights into the student's strengths and weaknesses and to suggest possible areas for instruction. However, long-term courses of remediation should not be charted on the basis of a single piece of writing. The particular writing may not be indicative of writing abilities or skills in another assignment, on another day, with different motivation and opportunity for revising and editing. At best, one piece may indicate a series of trial lessons or tentative strategies.

If the writing was unorganized or inadequately developed, was it lack of knowledge or interest in the particular topic? Did the writer simply put the ideas down as they came to mind, or was there a plan before the writing? Did the writer reread the paper and edit? Did he or she know how to organize and develop the narrative, report, explanation, or argument?

Does the lack of terminal punctuation in a particular paper stem from careless haste or from lack of sentence sense?

Since the nature of the instruction will differ, analysis of student papers must be supplemented by observation of the students while they write and by conferences with students about their writing (perhaps merely a word or two at the student's desk) during the various stages of composing and editing. Whatever the findings, they should be shared with the student judiciously – a few at a time, in order of their importance for communication and of the relative ease with which they can be remedied. A lengthy recital of errors will serve as a deterrent rather than a stimulus to further writing and transfer the student's focus from the communication of ideas to concern with correctness. The student may become too careful, too afraid to take the risks that lead to more mature writing.

The function of diagnosis is to give guidance to the teacher. Records may be kept in the form of checklists or profiles or simple notes in narrative form. Whatever the form, they are to help the teacher plan remediation for the individual, the group, the class.

How would you respond and diagnose the papers on the following pages? You do not know your students. These are the first samples you have seen.

You may want to check your judgment with that of other teachers in your school or department. The comments facing the compositions which follow were made by teachers and supervisors who participated in the WEDGE project.

(20 minutes for writing)

(5 minutes for rereading and correcting)

The experiences that we remember are usually those that were particularly happy, sad, fearful, embarrassing, or triumphant.

Write about one such experience describing both what happened and how you felt when it happened.

The saddess experience was when my grandfather died, WE was planning on visting my Grandparents for the summer because WE haven't seen them for more then nine years. What hurt my THE most was that They let us Know That my Grandfather was dead. a couple of days after he was deed when we got on the plan to go to P.R. When WE got there They had buried him already. I'd didn't get to see my Grandfather. I felt left out of of something I Knew that my family shouldn't have been left out at all.

RESPONSE TO STUDENT

(Comments such as the following, written or oral, during brief conference)

Your paper conveys your feelings very sensitively and I sympathize with you as I too remember my grandfather with love, although I can't remember his death at all. How old were you when your grandfather died? Did you remember him after not seeing him for nine years, or did you feel sad for your family? What was he like? What happened when you saw your grandmother? Tell us more about that visit. I'm not sure what you mean by "they" – make it clearer. Also, you left out a few of your periods and so I'm a little confused about what you mean.

DIAGNOSIS FOR TEACHER USE

(Notes like these or a checklist like that on p. 148)

Content:

Student understood task and responded with honestly and sensitively written experience.

Organization:

Adequate narrative sense but details meager . . . Ask questions to elicit more . . .

Word Choice:

Simple but appropriate

Sentence Sense and Usage:

Verb problem . . . we was; we haven't for hadn't

Tense shifts but also used correctly elsewhere

Proofreading needed

Try patterning as indicated

Mechanics:

Capitalization: Random capitals confusing. (Handwriting errors or knowledge of punctuation rules?) Upper and lower case letters confused. Guide sheet might help.

Spelling:

saddess for *saddest* (carelessness, pronunciation, superlative?)

plan for *plane* (carelessness or long vowel rule?)

visting for *visiting* (carelessness or pronunciation?)

(20 minutes for writing)

(5 minutes for rereading and correcting)

The experiences that we remember are usually those that were particularly happy, sad, fearful, embarrassing, or triumphant.

Write about one such experience describing both what happened and how you felt when it happened.

I felt happy overfulling; thrilled, fearful, glad and happy. On my grauatetion. When thy call all student on stage To get than papers. We went up there one by one. What was so funny about it I was the only student girl without a hat. My mother and Annt pick me out they say. When my time came up I was so nervse that I had shaking with the wrong hand. "Wall"; its take me 5 min to get it right. Before I got off stage, my annt gave me a big bouflat of flowers. I was so surpriced that I almost cried. The people took pictures of me and my annt.

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RESPONSE TO STUDENT

Big moments often make us nervous before they come, but somehow things sort themselves out. When you're happy and the people around you are happy, all the things you worried about turn out not to be so serious. I'll bet you still have the pictures.

Let's reread this together and see where you want to start one sentence and end another.

DIAGNOSIS FOR TEACHER USE

Content:

Effectively conveys situation and emotion

Organization and Development:

Narrative sense adequate

Word Choice:

Risk taker – uses vocabulary effectively although not always correctly

Sentence Sense and Usage:

No sentence sense -- try reading her paper to her.

Follow by dictation of short paragraph from literature read by another student.

Check journal writing – have her keep it short at first.

Mechanics:

Illiterate – dictation helpful? Needs step by step remediation without dampening writing spark

(20 minutes for writing)
(5 minutes for rereading and correcting)

The experiences that we remember are usually those that were particularly happy, sad, fearful, embarrassing, or triumphant.

Write about one such experience describing both what happened and how you felt when it happened.

When I was in the sixth grade. I was chosen to be the salutatorian of the graduating class. I was so happy and thankful to know that I was paid off for working in the high standards of my class subjects. When graduation came my name was on the Program. I gave a speech on the subject "Those who raised us." I was very happy to recieve that place and recieve so many certificats in, Math, Reading, Social Studies, Language Arts, Spanish & etc. I was also chosen the ~~sa~~ same night for the american Legion Award at Carnarsie High School. What a Happy day that was (June 23, 1978).

RESPONSE TO STUDENT

What an exciting day! You had reason to be happy and proud of yourself at your 6th grade graduation! I want to know more. Were you frightened at giving the speech? What did you say about "Those Who Raised Us"? Were your parents able to come to hear you? Did you have to go up to the stage several times or did they hand you the five certificates at once?

DIAGNOSIS FOR TEACHER USE

Content:

Student wrote to the topic but seemingly from a distance and for a "teacher" audience. Not enough real content. (Future assignments should be directed to a broader audience including peers.)

Organization and Development:

Narrative weakened by beginning before day of graduation, by paucity of details about graduation itself, by talking about rather than showing, by list-making rather than description. (Would role-playing help? – "Make believe it's graduation day. Show me what it was like.")

Word Choice:

No synonyms for "happy"

Sentence Sense and Usage:

Awkwardness in use of idioms – use of "paid off," "in the high standards," happy to receive "that place" (Risk taking? Attempt to use "academic" language?)

Good sentence sense but need for more sentence variety. – ("I was . . ." and "When I was . . .")

Mechanics:

Spelling: recieve, certificats

Random capitals – Program, Happy

Confusion on commas (omitted before: title of speech, etc.; inserted between preposition and object ("in, math;") and before parenthesis (June 23) (Would proofreading eliminate errors?)

No exclamation point (What a happy day that was.)

(Assignment was the same as that shown on p. 136.)

One Halloween night when I was about 10 or 11 Me and my sister had to go to the store for my mother. As I walked down the dark quiet block looking at ~~Jack-O-Lanterns~~, Halloween decorations of Jack O Lanterns, Ghosts, Witches, Skeletons and Monsters in the windows I got a little bit scared and I walked a ~~tittle~~ little bit faster, finally I got to the store and got what I wanted when I was coming out of the store getting ready to turn the corner My sister said she forgot ~~her~~ she had to get a soda for school the next day, so she went back and I told her that I would start walking and she could catch up to me, so I turned the corner and this boy named Darrell and his sister Anna scared me. I was so scared I was going to run but I thought about my sister because she was still in the store. We all started laughing and we were happy but I told Anna and Darrell never to do that again.

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RESPONSE TO STUDENT

You did a good job of describing how your imagination put you in the mood for a good scare on Halloween, but you didn't finish the story. What did Darrell and his sister do to frighten you?

DIAGNOSIS FOR TEACHER USE

Content:

Attends to task and attempts to tell amusing story of being frightened on Halloween.

Organization and Development:

Fairly good narrative sense – effectively builds up nervousness and scared feeling but falls down at climax by failing to give vital details and rushing the ending. (Some practice giving endings to cliff-hangers?)

Word Choice:

Appropriate and occasionally graphic but should be encouraged to use synonyms (a bit, scared)

Sentence Sense and Usage:

Run-ons – (Proofreading first to find out how much is carelessness. Then oral rereading. Also some sentence combining.)

Overuse of "so"

Use of "me" in compound subject

Mechanics:

Teach use of past perfect (she *had* forgotten)

Use of capitals for monsters (deliberate?)

(20 minutes for writing)
(5 minutes for rereading and correcting)

Perhaps your school has a problem which you feel can be corrected. It may deal with the lunchroom, programming, textbooks, or something else.

Write a letter to your school newspaper stating the problem as you see it and suggesting what should be done.

Dear Editor:

I feel the lunchroom program is Ridiculous the lunches Are UNsuitable for my tastes and my friends think it stinks The meat is Not Kosher it look like, quote "Grounded Rat" unquote.

The best thing they have is the bologna And cheese on A Roll, and The tacos. And milk but sometime, even the milk is sour.

Most of the food ends up in the trash anyway.

I Know A boy who goes to Hunter Junior High School And GETS Mcdonalds food right from the building And, it would cost less than outside STORE; Mcdonalds And the School split profits. Sounds Good To Me!!!!!

Thank you   Pat Doe

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RESPONSE TO STUDENT

Nobody ever praises school lunches, but you certainly make this one sound awful. Would you like the limited menu of McDonald's every day, or would you rather have the choices on your school list prepared in a more appetizing style? Your writing is lively and holds my interest.

I'm not always sure where your sentences end or begin. Look at them again.

DIAGNOSIS FOR TEACHER USE

Content:

Attended to task but with more heat than light. Would be improved by more specifics.

Organization and Development:

Presented problem and suggested solution but didn't think through before writing – no logical order to details.

Word Choice:

Appropriate for school newspaper?

Sentence Sense and Usage:

Random capitalization – handwriting problem?

Quotation error – needs instruction

Illogical sentences and fragments . . . failure to proofread?

Subject-verb agreement error . . . also proofreading?

(20 minutes for writing)

(5 minutes for rereading and correcting)

Write a composition on the following topic: "How to Make a Mess." After you finish writing, reread your paper and make corrections.

How to Make a Mess

Messing is my specialty if there was a subject keeping your room messy I would get A Im so good at messing rooms that I might even open a messing bussiness Between me and brother and toys my room is a disaster area. When we finish fighting my room looks like it has just got hit with a atom bomb. well I clean it up after and it starts all over again

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RESPONSE TO STUDENT

I'm super neat myself but I secretly admire the courage and dash of many people. Your paper has wit and spirit.

If you reread it you will probably catch such minor errors as "bussiness" and "start's." You find the others.

DIAGNOSIS FOR TEACHER USE

Content:

Wit and ability to express it on paper

Organization and Development:

Good expository piece, nicely developed

Word Choice:

Good.

Sentence Sense and Usage:

Good sentence sense and usage. Used "a" for "an" before vowel.

Mechanics:

Check failure to capitalize sentence beginnings. Carelessness? Handwriting?

Give mnemonic for business

Call attention to apostrophe error (start's)

Focus on proofreading, perhaps first with another pupil

Encourage writing for school papers and contests as motivation for checking.

(20 minutes for writing)

(5 minutes for rereading and correcting)

The experiences that we remember are usually those that were particularly happy, sad, fearful, embarrassing or triumphant.

Write about one such experience describing both what happened and how you felt when it happened.

I felt sad when my dog died on September 7, 1979, but I am going to get a new dog in about three weeks. When my dog died I felt very sad but when I found out I was getting another one I wasen't as sad. When we got my dog it was christmas I was so happy to get her She was a christmas present from my mother + father.

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RESPONSE TO STUDENT

It is very sad to lose a pet that you have grown to love. I would like to hear more about what happened and how you felt when it happened. Was your dog sick or was he in an accident? How long did you have this dog? Did you take care of him all by yourself? Why do you think you felt so sad? What are some of the things that you will remember about him even when you have gotten your new dog?

DIAGNOSIS FOR TEACHER USE

Content:

Does not develop one idea about topic; help decide on focus (talking might be more beneficial than writing)

Organization and Development:

Has difficulty deciding where to start narrative. Reread paragraph aloud and help determine where story starts.

Word Choice:

Seems adequate; more content will probably demand a wider choice of words

Sentence Sense and Usage:

Good variety of patterns

Mechanics:

Punctuation of main and subordinate parts of sentence

Capital letters for names of holidays

(20 minutes for writing)

(5 minutes for rereading and correcting)

The experiences that we remember are usually those that were particularly happy, sad, fearful, embarrassing, or triumphant.

Write about one such experience describing both what happened and how you felt when it happened.

I was I Canada over ~~on~~ the past ~~a~~ three summer, and every. time I had ~~to~~ to left I was very sad.

Because I love Canada and I love going there,

I am always happy to get there and, I always have such a great ~~sh tim~~ time, I enjoy ~~and~~ going to Canada. and I love it.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

RESPONSE TO STUDENT

You don't tell us very much. What happens in Canada that makes you like to go? Where do you go and what do you do there? Do you remember anything particularly special that happened in Canada?

DIAGNOSIS FOR TEACHER USE

Content:

Doesn't attend to task

Organization and Development:

No narrative sense evidenced. Ask questions to develop narrative in writing.

Sentence Sense and Usage:

Verbs forms (left for leave) (carelessness, foreign language?)

Incomplete sentences -- run ons, fragments

three summer (carelessness?)

Mechanics:

Termination punctuation (weakness results in run-ons and fragments)

Proofreading needed (reading aloud might help find own errors)

STUDENT WRITING PROFILE

NAME **SCHOOL** **GRADE**

The student needs help in:	Dates and types of writing samples		
Understanding the assignment			
Knowing what the topic is			
Knowing something appropriate to say about the topic			
Knowing how to address the paper to the intended audience			
Organizing the paper			
Demonstrating a general plan			
Dividing the paper into paragraphs where appropriate			
Making transitions between ideas (or parts)			
Making logical generalizations from examples given			
Giving appropriate examples, reasons, details – to support generalization			
Including only relevant details			
Following correct form, where form is a factor – business letters, etc.			
Choosing the best words			
Using an appropriate vocabulary			
Using correct forms of words			
Maintaining consistent levels of usage			
Using specific words			
Using words accurately			
Sentence Sense			
Writing complete correct sentences			
Using more than one type of structure			
Using punctuation to vary sentences			
Mechanical skills			
Spelling correctly			
Using punctuation correctly			
Using capitalization correctly			
Writing legibly			
Proofreading skills			

Procedures for Conducting a One-to-One Workshop

Go through these steps in every conference.

Develop a comfortable working rapport with the writer.

Work toward a writer-responder relationship rather than a student-teacher relationship.

Determine whether or not the writer understands the assignment.

Ask: "Do you understand the assignment? Can you tell me about it *in your own words?*"

Determine whether or not the writer has a clear sense of his/her audience and purpose.

Ask: "Who might be reading this? Parents? Friends? Readers of the school newspaper?" (Try to avoid naming the teacher as sole audience.)

Ask: "What is your purpose? Do you aim to explain? Persuade? Express your feelings?"

Go through these steps when the writer does not have a draft.

Explore with the writer how he/she might go about gathering or producing ideas and materials.

Explore with the writer some possibilities for organizing the ideas and materials.

Go through these steps when the writer has a completed draft.

Ask the writer to read the draft aloud to you.

In reading the draft aloud to an immediate audience, the student often sees the piece anew and is able to correct jumbled sentences, non-standard features, missing words, and even larger problems of organization.

Help the student to revise the draft.

Primarily through skillful questioning and by responding as an attentive listener, help the writer to recognize and solve problems in the draft such as organizing, adding detail, clarifying, sentence-combining or simplifying, and diction.

Help the student to edit and proofread the draft.

The final step involves a careful polishing activity, during which the teacher and student look for mechanical errors and prepare the piece to be read by others.

*** Adapted from a workshop conducted by Charles R. Cooper and Ann Matsuhashi at a conference sponsored by the New York State Department of English Education in Albany in May, 1979.**

Evaluation

Evaluating Student Writing

Holistic and analytical scoring are two different ways of assessing student writing. The usefulness of each varies with the nature of the writing to be scored, and with its relationship to the instructional objectives to be measured.*

Both have their uses on a school or district-wide basis. Both can be adapted to classroom use. Neither method of evaluation should be relied on to the exclusion of the other. The primary use of holistic scoring is as a tool to set uniform standards for screening and measuring progress. To develop a remedial program, writing must be analyzed in greater detail, whether or not a system of analytical scoring is employed.

Holistic Scoring for a Department

Holistic scoring, as described by the Educational Testing Service of Princeton, judges writing for its total effect involving both content and manner of expression. You read the student paper quickly and evaluate its total impact. Your impression of the writing may be negatively influenced if it contains many errors in spelling, syntax, or organization. However, the separate elements are not as important as the overall quality of the response.

The writing is rated on a four, five or six-point scale. The criteria for assigning points are established in a group session where scorers rank a sample of four to six papers, discuss their rationales for the ranking, and develop a consensus for their guidelines for scoring papers on the scale. (See p. 152.)

Once the meaning of the four-point scale, for instance, has been established, every student response is read by two separate scorers. If the two scores are identical or adjacent, *e.g.*, 2/3, 3/4, they are added together to create a single score for the exercise. For example, the scores 2 and 3 are adjacent so they are added together to make a score of 5. If the two scores are discrepant, *e.g.*, 1/3, 2/4, the response is rescored by two other readers. If the new scores are discrepant again, then the chair or a chief reader acts as an arbitrator and assigns a final score to the response.

When a whole department gets together to mark papers holistically, the logistics of the scoring system in some ways resembles an assembly-line procedure. Readers sit at stations with a stack of student papers to the left of them. After they read and score a paper, they put it in a pile to the right of them. An aide picks up the scored responses and cycles them until they have received two identical or adjacent scores. In this way, readers keep reading responses in a quick and attentive manner which maximizes the objective accuracy of the scoring across the entire group of papers.

In order to ensure that the second reader is not influenced by the first reader's judgment, the first mark is folded under or covered by a removable adhesive disk. In a separate operation, scores are compared and if identical or one digit apart are added and recorded next to the student's identification number or on a list. As an alternative device to maintain independent judgment, each marker initials the paper but records scores on separate numbered lists which may be correlated later. Educational Testing Service uses a code which masks scores.

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* See pp. 178-179.

Reader's Scores for Training Papers

	(Score) 6	(Score) 5	(Score) 4	(Score) 3	(Score) 2	(Score) 1
Paper A						
Paper B						
Paper C						
Paper D						
Paper E						
Paper F						

Rank Order of the First Six Training Papers

	Best	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	WORST
Paper A						
Paper B						
Paper C						
Paper D						
Paper E						
Papar F						

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SETTING UP STANDARDS FOR A SIX-POINT SCALE

Level Six Paper: *A Superior Paper*

1. Writes on the assigned topic with clarity, imagination, and orginality
2. Reflects an awareness of audience and purpose of the assignment
3. Has a logical organization of ideas
4. Uses ample relevant supportive material or anecdote
5. Shows command of sentence structure and language
6. Contains no mechanical errors of any significance

Level Five Paper: *A Good Paper*

1. Writes on the assigned topic, with material that is clear, appropriate and interesting
2. Reflects an awareness of audience and purpose of the assignment
3. Has a logical organization of ideas
4. Uses sufficient material or relevant anecdotes
5. Shows competence in sentence structure and language
6. Contains a minimum of mechanical errors

Level Four Paper: *An Adequate Paper*

1. Writes on the assigned topic adequately
2. Has discernible organization
3. Includes some supportive material or anecdotes
4. Has reasonably adequate sentence sense
5. May contain mechanical errors which do not significantly interfere with meaning

Level Three Paper: *A Marginal Paper*

1. Responds to assigned topic but may ramble
2. May be weak in organization
3. May lack variety in word choices
4. May have inadequate supportive material
5. May contain mechanical errors which do not significantly interfere with meaning

Level Two Paper: *A Weak Paper*

1. May be meagre in ideas and content
2. May ramble or stray from assigned topic
3. May lack clarity and appropriate word choice
4. May be weak in organization
5. May have frequent sentence structure errors
6. May contain mechanical errors which interfere with meaning

Level One Paper: *A Very Poor Paper*

1. Lacks content
2. May ramble or stray from assigned topic
3. Lacks clarity
4. Lacks organization
5. Frequent errors in sentence structure
6. Serious mechanical errors which interfere with meaning

Level Zero Paper: DOES NOT RESPOND TO THE TOPIC – AN IRRELEVANT PAPER

Note: Overwhelming strengths in some areas and deficiencies in others will require special consideration.

Holistic Scoring for the Individual Teacher

Several times a term it is necessary or desirable to grade a set of papers, preferably when goals for the particular piece of writing have been clearly established and when time has been allowed for revising and proofreading. Techniques adapted from holistic marking will make the task less time-consuming and will result in less idiosyncratic scores.

Sample your class set by pulling out four to six papers, including (when you know your class) the ones likely to be the best and the poorest. Read and rank the papers according to student fulfillment of the demands of the particular writing task, taking into consideration both content and mechanics. Make no corrections. Based on your ranking, assign a grade A to D or 90 to 60. Reserve F or 55 for a paper which did not address the topic. Then read and grade the rest of the papers. It should not be necessary to spend more than a minute or two on each paper.

Recording your initial grade on a class list instead of on the student paper will allow you further to check on the reliability of the grade with a second reading by a buddy teacher whose papers you read in exchange. When such team marking is not possible, you can do the second reading yourself after a time lapse.

If the two scores for a paper are adjacent letter grades or within 10 points, final score is an average. If scores vary more widely, paper must be reread, subjected to more detailed analysis, and reevaluated more carefully. Later, some of these same papers should be examined more analytically to determine the kinds of remediation indicated.

Analytic Marking for the Individual Teacher

During the term, or as end-term evaluation, analytic marking of writing has merit, primarily when focus has been on a particular isolated component of writing – spelling, commas, usage, sentence structure. It involves counting misspelled words, tense inconsistencies, or run-on sentences, etc.

At its simplest level, the paper is either acceptable or not acceptable, based on the criteria established. For example, a paper with two or more fragments or run-ons fails.

More involved scoring systems may be devised. Obviously, the more objectives measured and the more involved the scoring system, the more time-consuming the marking.

Of course, the students are advised in advance of criteria for judging and in many instances, with the support of a checklist, can be involved in the marking itself.

Diederich Marking Scale

The Diederich marking scale is more detailed than the simple holistic scale, but not as mechanistic as analytic scoring.

General Merit	Low		Middle		High
Ideas	2	4	6	8	10
Organization	2	4	6	8	10
Wording	1	2	3	4	5
Flavor	i	2	3	4	5
Mechanics					
Usage	1	2	3	4	5
Punctuation	1	2	3	4	5
Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
Handwriting	1	2	3	4	5

Total_______

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Objective Tests

Standardized objective tests for the most part are tools for assessing isolated skills needed for writing effectively, such as spelling, usage, transitions, and sometimes form.

However, the major argument against relying on objective tests is that they test editing rather than composing skills. A second is the question of transfer. Because students know what to do doesn't mean they can do or that they do do. A 100% on a multiple-choice usage test doesn't mean students are consistent in use of tense in a narration, for instance, or they they can necessarily edit their own papers.

Because of these limitations, objective tests – standardized or teacher made – cannot be a measure of student writing skills. (See p. 180 for T-Unit Writing level formula.)

MONTHLY STUDENT GOALS

Name. ____________________

Writing Activities

Month: ____________________

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
Week 1					
Week 2					
Week 3					
Week 4					
Week 5					

Goal for month: ____________________

____

Problems: ____________________

____

Date	Problem	Assignment	Completed

Appendix

A word in WEDGE-WISE

WRITTEN BY STUDENTS IN THE WEDGE *PROJECT*
COMMUNICATION ARTS UNIT
131 LIVINGSTON STREET, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201

Tiny Tiffanye and Proud Philip

Marvelous Marsha and Macho Man Manny married off their mixed-up maid, Mary, to their mailman, Michael. Michael made marvelous magic and moved mixed-up Mary to magnificent Miami. Mary managed a magnificent meal for Michael to munch on while in their marble mansion.

Marsha Ortega

Proud Philip put his arm around Pretty Paula and was pushed piggishly by a passing Pied Piper.

Philip proudly punished the pedestrian properly by putting pickled pepper in his pipe, preventing him from playing.

Philip Minott

Mickey Mouse made Minnie Mouse mad Monday morning. Minnie Mouse mumbled madly at Mickey Mouse because of money matters. Mickey merrily made matters more meaningful and won back Minnie Mouse's mouthful of music.

Yvette Santiago

On Tuesday terrific tiny Tiffanye temporarily taught three terrible tameless tigers to tackle twelve twins twice while tumbling through Tennessee.

Tiffanye Warren

Stuttering Steven stood standing stiffly by the seashore, staring at Seductive Sylvia. Steven, supposedly sociable, strode stylishly towards Seductive Sylvia, stuttering sweet sounds.

Cindy Agosto

Tiny Tina told a tale that Terry told to Teddy. The tale that Tina told to Terry, Teddy told to Tony. The tale that Teddy told to Tony was the tale that Tony told to Tina. So the tale that Tina told was the tale they told to Teddy that Terry told.

Rosa Rivera

10th Grade
Dodge Vocational High School
Teacher: Johanna Mosca

If I Were a...

If I were a food, I'd be an orange because I's sweet and juicy.

Jenny Justiniano

If I were a piece of furniture, I'd be a lamp because I turn on and off.

Ressie King

If I were an animal, I'd be a bird because I'm free-spirited and always a wanderer.

Jennie Justiniano

If I were a car, I'd be a Cadillac because I'm fast and jazzy.

Michelle Williams

If I were a weapon, I'd be a bomb because I'm ready to go off at any time.

Ressie King

If I were a flower, I'd be a daisy because I'm well known.

Pamela Turner

If I were an animal, I'd be a pussy cat, because I'm soft to hold.

Augustina Merced

If I were a dog, I'd be a German Shepherd because I'm vicious.

Lisa Figueroa

If I were a food, I'd be a pickle because every time someone saw me their mouth would water.

Tonia Hairston

If I were a piece of candy, I'd be a Snicker because I'm dark and nutty.

Sonia Brown

If I were a flower, I'd be a morning glory because I get up with the sun, disappear at night, and I am just as beautiful again the next morning.

Esther Evans

If I were a car, I'd be a Monte Carlo because I'm sophisticated, beautiful, and attractive.

Sylvia Camacho

If I were a car, I'd be a Toyota because I'm tough and can handle anything that comes my way.

Chandra Ramkumar

If I were a piece of furniture, I'd be an armchair because I'm comfortable.

Awilda Otero

If I were a stuffed animal, I'd be a teddy bear because I'm very cute to cuddle up with.

Crystal Carey

If I were a car, I'd be a limousine because I'm expensive and classy.

Daisy Fernandy

If I were an animal I'd be a dog because I'm a child's best friend.

Gloria Lopez

9th Grade
Jane Addams Vocational High School
Teacher: Cynthia G. List

I'm More like a...

I'm more like a cat than an elephant because I'm quiet, cautious and active.

Felicia Neblett

I'm more like a banana than a plum because I can be slippery.

Patricia Craig

I'm more like an ice cream cone than Jello because I'm slick, cool, and easy to love.

Rosita Elias

I'm more like a lake than a pool because my spirit is natural and free.

Nicole Rousseau

I'm more like a rare coin than a penny because I'm precious.

Dona Nickerson

I'm more like the sun than the moon because I'm bright and warm all day long.

Frances Nazario

I'm more like a kitten than a cat because I'm curious, playful and affectionate.

Lorraine Kurdziel

I'd rather be "bread" than "water" because I'd like to be in the dough.

Margaret Seda

I'm more like an apple than a grape because I'm sweet, delicious, and juicy!

Arleen Silvera

I'd rather be a flower than a rock because I'm delicate, soft, and sometimes pretty to look at.

Maria Sirvent

I'm more like a sneaker than a shoe because I'm more athletic.

Juliet Smith

I'm more like a heart than a "sole" because I love to give from the top of my heart more than to give from the bottom of my "sole" (soul).

Daron Hill

I'm more like a letter "N" than a letter "C" because I'm naive, nefarious, nicety, nightwalker, nitwit, nocuous, nomad, nonhero, and non-reader. But most of all, because I'm nearsighted Nelva!

Nelvita Cintrol

9th Grade
St. Joseph High School
Teacher: Sister J. William

Dying

The experience I remember most is when I was cut by a piece of light bulb, and my brother convinced me that I was going to die. I felt willing to die. There was not much anger or fear in me, just a sense of readiness. I patiently waited for the angel of death to come upon me. I summoned my other three brothers to say good-bye. There was a click in the door; then my mother walked into the room. I told her what had happened. She chased me off my death bed to go take a bath. After that she gave my eager mortician brother the whipping of his life.

Patricia Craig

9th Grade
St. Joseph High School
Teacher: Sister J. William

I Wish

I wish I was an only child instead of just one of the bunch. Then, I would get lots of toys for Christmas and on my birthday. I would even get to watch whatever I wanted to on TV. In the morning I wouldn't have to wait on line for the bathroom.

Most important, I would have my own room instead of sharing it with my brother. If he had his way, he would decorate it like a garbage dump. He is a real slob.

I know this will never happen, but it sure is nice to think about it.

Mark Graham

10th Grade
Francis Lewis High School
Teacher: Binnie Keshet

> I cherished ... the broken gestures of the knives still lying across one another, the swollen convexity of a discarded napkin upon which the sun would patch a scrap of yellow velvet, the half empty glass which thus showed to a greater advantage the noble sweep of its curved sides.
>
> REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST
> Marcel Proust

Apple

The indented sphere of autumn placed before us is sweet-smelling, smooth, and reminiscent of the summer gone by. Speckled red and a smear of green merge unevenly at the top. The curved leaf remains perched above in an assured manner, surveying the sphere below. Beneath the dappled veneer dwells a crunchy tart and fragrant pulp, green at youth but brown with age. When biting into its depths, the flavor refreshes your taste buds like an autumn breeze invigorates your soul.

Elisa Gansell

Lemon

As my hand passed over the surface of this oval object I felt its bumpy texture. The little ridges rose and fell with a certain regularity very similar to that of sandpaper but larger and smoother. It was as yellow as an ear of corn, a bright shiny yellow that contrasted sharply with the gloomy weather outside. I pinched its flexible surface and the object released a smell, a sweet and tangy smell, as refreshing as a cool spring day.

Dror Futter

10th Grade
Joel Braverman High School
Teacher: Suzanne Blaine

My Family

I knock three times. My mother opens the door. My father is sitting in the kitchen. I hate to see him because I think of what he did in the past. He is so ignorant. He makes me sick. My mother is so very religious and patient. She is like the mother and father. She pays the rent and all our expenses. She doesn't have to buy anything for me because I work. She's cooking like always. She is so nice to us. When I walk into the living room my sisters are sitting down. They are all doing their homework. The ceiling is so high, it makes me feel like a small bug. The TV is in a little corner since there are so many things in the living room - the sofas, the stereo, the TV, and bookshelves and a beautiful chair.

My father is an alcoholic. He makes me cry inside my heart when I see him. I never show my feelings. I write everything down in my journal. My journal is like a person who I speak to. I write all my problems.

My mother is home in the day. Yet in the evening she goes to her religious meetings.

When it's time to bathe, all my sisters are waiting around with their towels. We are all girls. We walk around the house anyway.

Sometimes, on weekends, I feel like just sitting in bed and crying. I am a very strong person. Just looking at my father makes a deep anger build up inside me. Yet, my father loves me more than all my sisters. He feels that I am the smartest.

Student's name withheld.

10th Grade
Washington Irving High School
Teacher: Fran Barst

Color

The following is an example of a poem based on the color red, written at a WEDGE workshop.

Red is ...

Red is the "heat" of my
anger and hatred and fear

Red is a fire engine
screaming

But red is a tart
apple for the teacher

Red is the rose

from my lover

Additional samples based on a Carl Sandburg poem follow.

> My people are gray
> pigeon gray, dawn gray, storm gray.
> I call them beautiful
> and I wonder where they are going.
>
> Carl Sandburg

My dreams are red
burgundy red, garnet red, rose red.
I call them all strange
and I wonder where they all came from.

Nan Chiu

My people are yellow
dark yellow, light yellow, straw
yellow.
I call them pretty,
and I wonder where they are now.

Marina Ng

My people are black
brownish black, dark black.
I call them beautiful.
I know where they are going.

Janice Pasterisa

10th Grade
Seward Park High School
Teacher: Anna Krauthammer

Sketch

I have a friend who has an overprotective mother and grandmother. For instance, wherever she goes, they have to know the exact place, what time she'll be home, and are always calling her up.

I myself think this is silly in some ways, for the girl is almost 18. The girl went to take a college test and her mother had to go with her. This is really overprotective. She always gets her way, let me point this out. If she is out eight minutes after she says she'll be back (she always has to say when she'll be back), they will be outside looking or calling up. When the slightest thing happens, they are upset and are on her side most of the time. They are wonderful people. Possibly the best ever. But they don't realize what they are doing.

Jesse Romage
10th Grade
Dewitt Clinton High School
Teacher: Esther Nolan

I Hate

I hate.
I hate math.
I hate math homework.
I hate math homework with Roman numerals.
I hate math homework with Roman numerals
because it confuses me.
I hate math homework with Roman numerals
because it confuses my mother and me.

I hate math homework with Roman numerals
because it confuses my mother, my
father, and me!

Michael D'Arrego

I Hate

I hate.
I hate pencils
I hate pencils because they break in school.
I hate pencils because they always break in
school when I can't sharpen them.
I hate pencils because they always break in
school when I can't sharpen them during
a test.

Andrew Shapiro

4th Grade
P.S. 197K
Teacher: Miriam Slater

When I was in nursery I did something I will remember for the rest of my life.

I love animals and I thought it was really cruel the way they kept the little rabbit in a cage the whole day. The rabbit was a little white ball of fluff. Every day some kids kept on teasing the rabbit with some carrots. I told them to stop, but they shoved me away. I told the teacher once and she told me never to tell on other pupils. I was dumbfounded. I could not understand how the teacher could not love the rabbit.

The next day when all the kids were outside, I took the rabbit and gave him a hug and let him go.

He hopped up the steps and out the door. I thought he would go up the steps to the other classes but he did not. He went down the steps and into the street. I ran after him to stop him but I was too late. A big ugly Chevy came down the street and I did not see the glistening ball of fur.

The rabbit was hit and he landed at my feet. The red liquid was oozing out of his ears and nose.

I did not move. I started to cry and did not stop for two hours. All the kids thought, "Who cares"- So the rabbit died." But I knew it was because of me that the little ball of fur lived no more!

Marc Geller

8th Grade
Yeshivah of Flatbush
Teacher: Davilda Foxman

You see, Miss Persky, there was a zoo passing through and a lion got loose. He held me up by a wall. The only thing I could do was give him a good karate chop. Then he roared and I roared back.

It was a fight. A defenseless little girl against a fierce lion. The lion started to back up. (I knew he was scared.) I picked up the lion and threw him in his cage and that's why I'm late.

Oh, and one more thing. I have to pay $200 in damages!

Penny Henry

5th Grade
P.S. 219 K
Teacher: Bonnie Persky

I must tell you about one of the greatest experiences in my life. When I was in the first grade at St. Kevins, my class did "Frosty the Snowman" -- not the play, but the song. We all were so excited when Sister told us that we were going to appear in front of the entire school and sing.

It took us about 3 weeks to get the song down pat. Seeing that none of us could read very well, this was quite a major accomplishment.

After rehearsing we went downstairs to the auditorium and she staged the whole number. Until this day I can remember the steps. They went something like this: We all started in one line, then back two steps. Then came my absolute favorite part. I used to practice it in my bedroom using chairs as other people. Every other person would jump around behind the person to his left. These people were the back-up people. We did the "doo-waas."

About two weeks before we were to go on my mother saw us rehearsing. She thought that the overall effect was missing something. She talked it over with Sister and she went to work making Snowman costumes for everyone. You should have seen them. They consisted of one big white sack tied in the middle and stuffed to the seams with newspaper. I still have mine and every now and than I take it out to look at.

The night of the show came and I was so excited. There we were all stuffed and crinkly. We were all buzzing around like little bumble bees. Then Sister told us all to get ready. I was so nervous I was sure I'd forget what to do. Then the curtain opened and the music started. I forgot all my fears and just had a great time with it, me and my "doo-waas."

I look back at this as my first theatrical production. I suppose that was what made my mind up for me to become an actor. Until this day I have always loved the song "Frosty the Snowman."

Mark Graham

10th Grade
Francis Lewis High School
Teacher: Binnie Keshet

If I Were a Pair of Magic Sneakers

One day a shoemaker made a pair of sneakers. That night a magic sneaker fairy came and made them magic sneakers. The sneakers jumped off the shelf and started dancing around the floor.

The next day a boy came into the shoemaker's shop. He took the shoelaces from the sneakers and put them on his shoes. That night the sneakers tried to dance, but they could not walk or dance because they were without their shoelaces. They were not magic anymore.

The next day, the boy turned to the shoemaker's shop. He was sad and upset, because he had taken the shoelaces for his own shoes without telling the shoemaker. He discovered that he could not run fast or play ball well or ride his bike well anymore. He knew that he had done something wrong by taking the shoelaces.

The shoemaker was glad to see him again, and told him about the magic sneakers not being magic anymore. The boy returned the shoelaces and said that he was sorry.

The shoemaker was so happy that he let the boy use the sneakers for the athletic day race at his school.

The boy won the race and a big trophy, which made him happy, the shoemaker happy, and best of all, made the sneakers magic again.

Monica Publiese

4th Grade
Incarnation School - Queens
Teacher: Sister Dorothy Cook

A Family Project

During our first years in America, my parents had to try hard to bring about the way of life which we used to live. The most important thing was togetherness.

Secretly, my mother initiated a plan with one of my brothers. So, one Christmas Day, Mom gathered us together in our small living room. A little while after, there was a knock on the door; then a tall man came in the house. He pushed into the room a big thing. It was a piano!!

Everyone gathered around excitedly. My mother took the hands of one of my big brothers and played the piano and then went to another and another. So together we all sang with the tunes, and the feeling of old times gradually came back. We became happier and closer than before.

Ruel G. Pablo

4th Grade
P.S. 40M
Teacher: Gloria Yanuk

> Tiny though he (the insect) was, needing thirty-five of him to cover an inch of space, his coloring was exquisite; eyes dull scarlet, sparsely covered with golden hair, body armor of glistening black from head to tip of abdomen, with badge of yellow gold shining from between his wings. These wings were small, paddle-shaped and free of veining, while the scales on their surface glowed with iridescent play of lilac, yellow, and pale green.
>
> William C. Beebe
> Jungle Days

My shell looks like a lady with a beehive hairdo, when you hang it upside down. There are patches of rose sprinkled down to the tip of the shell. Inside it looks like clouds of ivory. It has ridges, like a Wise potato chip with ruffles.

Matthew De Grushe

Small but noticeable, the color was a mixture of pale red and wooden brown, decorated with golden yellow. On the back, it was smooth and gleaming white with a dip of rust brown and violet at the edges. The lovely decorative shell was like a miniature fan for little dolls to cool themselves on hot summer days. It is rough, with a pattern evenly shaped across its back; just like porcupine evenly protected with quills across his back. Anyone who finds this shell would treasure it.

Jean Tung

My shell is white with a brownish tint and inside it's a deep grape purple hue shaded with a light orange. The size is like the face of an oval watch. It's ridged outside - smooth inside. A round face with a droopy chin is twin to my shell.

Maureen O'Neill

I am holding a shell of great beauty. It feels like a turtle and looks like the pom-pom of my sock. It can also be mistaken for a little baseball cap. If you turn it upside down, it looks like a daisy. The colors of the shell are ivory white, off-yellow, and little specks of pale maroon. The colors remind me of a rainbow and the tip looks like a pot of gold. It's as big as a watch; it looks like one too but it certainly doesn't tell time.

Danielle Ermillio

5th and 6th Grades
St. Brendan's
Teacher: Regina Cahill

My Block is like...

My block is like a sad old man who gave up on being happy. There are holes in his shoes like the broken sidewalk and the streets' potholes. There's a sad emptiness in his heart as the bulldozer comes and rips down what is a part of him. And I see and hear all the people curse the old man and wish they might live somewhere else far away and I see the sad old man every day and I tell him--"Be happy, I've seen worse."

Michael Green

My block is like an old man who lost his life in a dice game and it went quickly. And all he does now is watch the little kids play on his doorstep. And he smells like he did not take a bath in weeks. He looks like a man who wants to die in peace, but his friends will not let him.

Robert Pendarvis

Thomas Jefferson High School
Teacher: Richard Cappuccio

Like Fighting a War

Cleaning your room is most definitely like a war. First, you battle it out with your mother. You defiantly exclaim, "No, I won't do it!" Your mother replies, "You'd better!" Then she offers you an alternative, "Or else you can't go to the movies tonight with your friends." You angrily mumble, "Oh, all right!" and groan and grumble as you walk away.

Climbing the stairs, your head held low in defeat, you reach your room - the battlegrounds. You take a look at your messy clothes and papers strewn around the room, books thrown under the bed, and -- all over the floor, your kid brother's toys. Complete devastation! You begin to dig out. You angrily organize your junk. You start by folding your clothes and putting them as neatly as you can into your drawer. The books you put neatly on the shelf in alphabetical order. Finally, your kid brother's toys retreat under the bed. After this, you give a smile of victory as you look over your room. Finally, you go downstairs to check out the time. "Oh! No!" you scream. "I've missed the double feature."

Gerald O'Neill

8th Grade
St. Brendan's
Teacher: Jacqueline Placona

Father or Daughter: Chinese or Ballet

I think Sue-Mei should go to Chinese School because she could learn how to speak Chinese.

If she goes to the ballet school, when she gets older she will not speak the way the Chinese children do. So, I think she should go to the Chinese School.

Alfredo Diaz

I think Sue-Mei's father is right, and she should not drop out of Chinese School. She could learn more about being Chinese

However, in a way she is right too. In ballet she could learn nice things too. I agree more with Sue-Mei. She wanted to go there so badly! If Sue-Mei's father wanted her to listen to him, I think he should have tried to convince her to go to the special Chinese School.

Marisol Versa

Sue-Mei's father was right to send her to a Chinese School and not learn ballet because Sue-Mei should know more about her customs and heritage.

Richard Campbell

5th Grade
P.S. 34M
Teacher: Paul Ringel

There Ought to Be a Law

There ought to be a law against government officials voting themselves huge raises, while telling the people to cut back on salary demands. Officials don't care what they do with our money, only how much of it they can get without getting into trouble.

The president gets on television and requests that the people only ask for a 4% raise and also that stores should keep prices down. Then the city council vote themselves a 20 or 30% raise. They don't care what the president says. They are only interested in fattening their own pockets.

That money could be used to fill the many potholes and pave the many streets in this city.

Did you ever wonder why, when it's time for city workers to negotiate contracts, the city cries poverty, but when it's time for the mayor or city council to get a raise there is plenty of money?

City councilman is only a part-time job. Each member has another job, yet he makes more on the city council than most people make regularly. I think it should be up to the people to decide what kind of raise government officials get.

Adam Sackstein

9th Grade
J.H.S. 68K
Teacher: Carol Cohen

Should Men and Women Always Be Treated as Equals

Our nation has as its steadfast foundation equality, regardless of color or religion or sex, so it naturally follows that men and women are also equals. An individual's sex should be irrelevant.

Women are just as capable, intelligent and persevering as men. Golda Meir governed Israel, a country always in a state of war, effectively. Emma Lazarus and Jane Austen are only a few of doctors, lawyers and architects. To lower the status of the female sex is self deprivation of all their contributions.

It took the efforts of many men and women to make this great country. Not treating women as equals because of their sex is chipping away at the nation's foundation itself!

Joseph Wahba

9th Grade
Joel Braverman High School
Teacher: Suzanne Blaine

In my opinion, I feel men and women should not be treated equal. Whoever or whatever made us made us totally different.

Women cannot take as much physical pressure as men can. Most women cannot take as much emotional pressure as men can. Our bodies were made totally different. Women are constructed to breast feed babies, men are not. Men were made masculine for heavy duty work, women were not.

I believe men should be the head of the house, not because of intelligence but because of strength. Most of the time force is better than words: world wars is one example of that.

Maybe I feel this way not because of male chauvinism but maybe because I am old-fashioned, and the old-fashion ways are supposed to be the best.

Efraim Santos

10th Grade
Seward Park High School
Teacher: Anna Krauthammer

"Men and women chould always be treated as equals" is a statement that always causes a stir. Should they? Some people think so, others don't. People can always take sides when it comes to this question.

I think that the word "always" should be looked at carefully. There are some things that a woman just can't do. Either mentally or physically we're not equipped to handle everything that a man can. I can't understand why all the women's libbers who go crazy for equality in everything suddenly claim that we are not emotionally ready to be drafted into the war.

But on the other hand, women are humans as well as men and we can be trained to do anything men can. We can endure many more hardships that men don't have to. We can handle an office job just as well as or even more efficiently than men. I think the equality thing is a two-way street. Though we want to be equal we would like to keep the same values and ideas that we held before. It is good to be treated equal and not discriminated against, but it is nice to be treated like a lady.

Phyllis McCarthy

10th Grade
Adlai E. Stevenson High School
Teacher: Joyce Y. Hedgepeth

Reactions

...to introductory games by eighth graders in the WEDGE English class of Maureen Vidal at Intermediate School 318 in Brooklyn.

I was exited for my turn to come, so that I could name the people. It helped me see, how people felt about themselves That was for the first game

Second game. It was somewhat the same thing Both of these games also helped me see, what I think of myself being.

I felt happy. I was very glad we played this game. After this I won't forget what an adjective is. Or what allitoation is. This game is better that learning from the board. And while I am playing the game I also learn things.

I did not care.

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I felt anxious and excited waiting for my turn as the game went around the room. I was trying to figure out a name for everybody before the got to them. Then when it came my turn I couldn't quite find a name for me but it was alot of fun.

While we played those games I Felt

① excited
② calM
③ cool
④ Foolish

I didn't Know how to describe myself I was trying to be as honest as I could but not to pushy, about myself. For me trying to describe yourself is pretty hard. you might write done on the paper that you are a better person than the one you are.

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A tenth grader in the WEDGE class of Renee Kelvin at Eastern District High School reacts to free writing and cycling.

Free Writing

I don't like free writing, because the things that you do remember, are too personal. You really don't like nobody Knowing all your business. What ever I write I wouldn't want nobody to read it. It's just like being nosy. Especially teachers, Who like putting it in all Kinds of articals. Before you Know it, the whole world will Know about it.

English is a nice class, but this free writing is really getting on my nerves, oh the diary is alright but, this free writing, and letting everybody see what you write. You never Know what they be thinking about you. You really want them to think your nice, but after what they read about you, They could be thinking the worst things in the world.

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First Draft

I Know that free writing is nice for some people but not for me. I already explained why I didn't like it. Well any way its nice for some people because they like writing about their self. Most people that are lively and like free writing are not ashamed mistakes, they think its funny, exciting etc.

Maybe they dont remember as clearly as us people who are ashamed of our mistakes. We really don't like people finding out the truth about us. We think they might laugh at us.

The people who like doing this, they dont mind what people say about them or about the reading.

Some of us like what they say about our readings, like I liked what they said about mine, I thought they might criticize my writing; thats why I didn't want anyone to read it. But now its not so bad

---

Second Draft

Now I am not so shy any more to let some one read my writing. Because after its read and done with, and they Tell you what's wrong with it, Your writing becomes better just because you let a few people read it. You say Wow! That's great. my writing is really improving. Your mind opens up and you feel you should share your thoughts with everyone. And that brings out the best in you. You thought it was so hard, and now its simple. You really cant believe it.

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From a promising paragraph, a tenth grader developed a moving account of a young cousin's funeral. The final version was broadcast during Writer's Corner on WNYE-FM on October 20, 1977.

Glinda Martin
English 1 5

10.13.77

First Draft

An event that changed me was the death of my cousin. My cousin died when he was one I was sad but i didn't go to the extreme. When ~~[illegible]~~ we attended the funeral it was wet & muddy because it had been raining for a couple of days. When the ceremony was over & the were about to put the cakit into the ground, i look in the hole & saw worms & bugs and all sorts of creatures. When they lowered the body in the worms & the bugs were going in to the caskit & it made me sick. Every Since that day i refuse to go to anyone's funeral, especially mine.

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Second Draft

An event that changed my life was the death of my cousin. When my cousin died he was one year old. I was sad, but I didn't know him that well so his death didn't effect ~~my~~ me that much. I didn't want to go to his funeral but my mother said that i couldn't stay home by myself.

The funeral was on a wet, rainy monday. It was cold + the ground was muddy and i didn't feel like standing around waiting for the preacher (who was inside the church) to finish the sermon so we could go to the cemetery + bury my cousin.

When we arrived at the cemetery it was worse than i had expected. I thought everyone would say there good-bys and we could go home.

Well, when everyone looked in the whole + saw the mud + the worms, everyone started crying. My aunt started saying "Lord don't let them put my baby in there"

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I didnt know why she said it, so i looked in the hole myself.
When I looked at first i didn't see anything. But when they began lowering the casket into the ground i saw more than I want too. As the weight of the casket made the water rise. It looked as if the ground was sucking ~~[illegible]~~ my cousin to no point of return.

I think i must have ~~[illegible]~~ passed out or maybe i just don't want to remember want happened.

Ever Since that day i hope never gone went to another funeral. Maybe it's because i can't stand sorrow or tears. I don't ever cry when my mother beats me (she doesn't anymore, but i never used too).

When i die i would like to be cremated so that the worms & underground creatures can't get to me. My mother used to always say that when you die you don't feel anything. I used to say "How do you know did you ever die?". Her answer would be "No, but when i do I'll let you know how it feels."

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SAMPLE RADIO SCRIPT

Writers' Corner each week presents the work of students in the WEDGE Project, an experimental writing program designed to improve student writing. You will be hearing the work of students from 20 high schools, public and non-public, throughout the city.

Today's writer is a tenth grader in Eastern District High School in Brooklyn -- David Dicker, Principal; Arthur Singer, Chairman; and Renee Kelvin, English teacher in the WEDGE project.

Students in the WEDGE program at Eastern District were asked to write about an event in their lives that had changed them in some way. Among the responses was this moving piece by Glenda Martin.

An event that changed my life was the death of my cousin. When my cousin died, he was one year old. I was sad, but I didn't know him that well, so his death didn't affect me that much. I didn't want to go to this funeral, but my mother said that I couldn't stay home by myself.

The funeral was on a wet, raining, Monday. It was cold; the ground was muddy; and I didn't feel like standing around waiting for the preacher (who was inside the church) to finish the sermon so we could go to the cemetery and bury my cousin.

When we arrived at the cemetery, it was worse than I had expected. I thought everyone would say their good-byes and we could go home.

Well, when everyone looked in the hole and saw the mud and worms, they all started crying. My aunt moaned, "Lord, don't let them put my baby in there." I didn't know why she said it, so I looked in the hole myself.

At first, I didn't see anything. But when they began lowering the casket into the ground, I saw more than I wanted to. As the weight of the casket made the water rise, it looked as if the ground was sucking my cousin to a point of no return.

I think I must have passed out or maybe I just don't want to remember what happened.

Ever since that day I have never gone to another funeral. Maybe it's because I can't stand sorrow or tears. I don't even cry when my mother beats me. (She doesn't any more, but I never used to.)

When I die I would like to be cremated so that the worms and underground creatures can't get to me. My mother always used to say that when you die you don't feel anything. I used to say, "How do you know? Did you ever die?" Her answer would be, "No, but when I do, I'll let you know how it feels."

That touching account of a young person's reaction to a funeral was written by Glenda Martin, a participant in the WEDGE Writing Project at Eastern District High School. Next Thursday at the same time you will be hearing student writing from another high school in the city.

WRITERS' CORNER

Every student in the class contributed to the following collection of images broadcast on WNYE-FM's Writers' Corner on January 19, 1978.

SAMPLE RADIO SCRIPT

Writers' Corner each week presents the work of students in the WEDGE project, an experimental writing program designed to improve student writing. You will be hearing the work of students from twenty high schools -- public and non-public -- throughout the city.

Today's writers are 10th graders from William H. Maxwell Vocational High School in Brooklyn, Marion M. Lucchino, principal; Norman Kass, English chair; and Stanley Schwartz, English teacher in the WEDGE program.

The students at Maxwell learned about vivid imagery and wrote the following figures of speech.

She was such a cry baby, it seemed as though she carried an onion with her.

Sonia Rentas

I was so excited that my heart fluttered like a leaf falling from a tree.

Pauline McMillan

The rising sun was an egg hatching in the sky.

Linda Rattley

Her eyes were as blue as a policeman's uniform.

Evelyn Dross

My brother's room is a battlefield after an explosion.

Luz Perez

One cold morning my window was crying, so I wiped away her tears.

Evelyn Butler

The thunder overhead roared like a bowling ball down the alley.

Yvette Domingues

The boat sank and disappeared like a sugar cube in a cup of coffee.

Carmen Jiminez

The satiny fabric of her new coat reflected the light like a shiny half dollar.

Anne Clyburn

The autumn leaves were flames, burning in my fireplace.

Sandra Rivera

My sister is as skinny as the string on my kite.

Magaly Charlemagne

Her thoughts were as dark as the inside of a box.

Robin Smith

Her eyes are mirrors that reflect my every movement.

Theodora Glitsos

The lightning bug was a spy's flashlight signaling in the dark.

Jacqueline Witherspoon

Her anger was as swift as a lioness on the prowl.

Michelina Cafaro

A skunk is like a chocolate-covered ant, attractive--but watch out!

Jacqueline Witherspoon

I was as lonely as the last house left standing on a deserted city block.

Carol White

My boyfriend looked as fine as a Rolls Royce driving down Hollywood Boulevard.

Daisy Brooks

Her hair was as knotted as a tongue twister.

Shalimar Vazquez

The car ran as smooth as paper.

Vanessa Douglas

My neighbor's car sounds like a flock of frightened geese.

Bridgette Freeman

The baby is as soft as an easy chair.

Regina Robertson

My happy world would have a money tree on every street.

Lauieann Perry

After a fresh snow the city is a frosted cake.

Edna Reyes

My footsteps on the hard snow sounded like the crunching eggshells.

Kimberly Johnson

The baby's skin was as soft as the petals of a white rose.

Mary Ann Couvertier

She was as lonely as a single raft lost at sea.

Lisa Rogers

She was as thin as my father's hair.

Evelyn Ortiz

The moon last night was a bright yellow banana.

Valerie Dukes

The city was an exciting woman having a nervous breakdown.

Diana Wright

A child saving his pennies is like a cat guarding her kittens.

Colette Utley

The old man's cheeks were as soft as sponges.

Maria Torres

Beauty is a little girl's first satin doll.

Robin Smith

Money in my pocket is like rain and snow - it comes and goes.

Maria Melendez

A locked door is a mystery asking to be solved.

Evelyn Butler

When the wind blew, the leaves danced like joyful children.

Kim Montgomery

The snow landed with the grace of a butterfly.

Sandra Atiles

My brother must think he's a trash bag because he always collects garbage.

Marquette Miller

Clouds are the sky's soft pillows.

Valerie Byrd

The hose was a snake, silently and mysteriously awaiting its prey.

Michelina Cafaro

Writer's Corner
3/13/79

Today's writer is a 10th grader at William H. Maxwell Vocational High School in Brooklyn, Marion Lucchino, principal; Norma Kass, English chair; Melinda Ehrlich and Stanley Schwartz, English teachers in the WEDGE program.

In Miss Ehrlich's WEDGE class, Maria Estranza used Charles Dickens' classic opening to A Tale of Two Cities to make her own statement.

A Tale of Two Opposites

It was the best of times
 when I moved and met some really nice friends.

It was the worst of times
 when I was small and my grandmother died.

It was the age of wisdom
 when I was given sound advice.

It was the age of foolishness
 when that advice was not heard.

It was the epoch of belief
 when in 1964 I was told Santa Claus would come.

It was the epoch of incredulity
 when in 1969 some kid told me Santa and Mickey Mouse
 weren't real!

It was the season of lights
 when my parents were my "light."

It was the season of darkness
 when the lights went out in New York City.

It was the spring of hope
 when we passed our midterms.

It was the winter of despair
 when I looked for myself and "I" wasn't there.

We had everything before us
 when we were young and looked at the future.

We had nothing before us
 when we were old and glanced at the past.

Maria Estranza

10th Grade
William H. Maxwell Vocational H.S.
Teacher: Melinda Ehrlich

TOPICS FOR PRE-AND POST-WRITING ASSESSMENT

Narrative: Grades 4-6

Possible Use of Time:	10 minutes for planning or free writing
	20 minutes for writing
	10 minutes for revising and proofreading

Pre-test: Write about something that happened to you that made you feel afraid.

Post-test: Write about something that happened to you that made you feel happy or sad.

Narrative: Grades 7-12

Possible Use of Time:	10 minutes for planning or free writing
	20 minutes for writing
	5 minutes for revising and proofreading

Pre-test: Sometimes memories of our first years in school stay with us all our lives. Sometimes these memories are funny; sometimes they are happy; sometimes they are sad. Tell about one incident of your early school days, so that a reader can feel the way you felt when it happened.

Post-test: Sometimes we are unkind to someone or they are unkind to us without realizing it. Write about one such experience, describing both what happened and how the people involved felt.

Expository: Grades 7-12

Possible Use of Time:	10 minutes for planning or free writing
	20 minutes for writing
	5 minutes for revising and proofreading

Pre-test: Tell how you feel about writing. Why do you like or dislike having to write?

Post-test: Some people have suggested that writing is outdated, replaced by the telephone, the tape recorder, the camera. Tell whether you believe this is true or false. Give your reasons.

Persuasive: Grades 8-10

Possible Use of Time:	10 minutes for planning or free writing
	20 minutes for writing
	5 minutes for revising and proofreading

Pre-test: Your English class is making plans for a special end-term treat. The class is considering a dance in the gym, a boat ride around Manhattan, or a theater party to a Broadway play. Write a letter to your teacher. Give your choice, and at least two reasons for it.

Post-test: Perhaps your school has a problem which you feel can be corrected. It may deal with the lunchroom, programming, textbooks, or something else. Write a letter to your school newspaper stating the problem as you see it and suggesting what should be done.

Holistic Scoring*

Holistic scoring is primarily useful to set uniform standards and to serve as an evaluative tool for screening and measuring progress. Remediation requires further analysis of papers.

Advantages

1. Because various components of writing are considered simultaneously, readers are forced to view writing as an integrative process. Thus, teachers are encouraged to view teaching writing as more than the teaching of parts.
2. Having more than one reader per paper assures a more accurate assessment of the writer's skills.
3. Because of the nature of the training session, the participants in a holistic scoring session can gain many insights into the nature of the writing process and its assessment. Teachers usually learn that, even though they may have widely disparate views of writing and of teaching writing performance, not only can they agree on the scores they assign to student papers but they can also explain those scores according to standards that they themselves have developed.
4. The experience of reading and judging together during the scoring encourages teachers to talk about writing. Their experience with the writing ability of the school population is greatly expanded because the readers are able to view a much wider range and number of student essays than they are likely to meet in the classroom during a single year. Teachers of the grade level being tested can see a larger picture of the needs of students as a group. Teachers from higher grades have a clearer notion of what to expect from the students who will be coming their way in the following years, which is a potential source of help in planning activities for the classroom.
5. Teachers often carry over into the classroom what they have learned in discussions during the scoring about the nature and development of the writing topics or tasks, and about the safeguards that should be employed to ensure that the students' work is being fairly appraised.
6. Teachers who learn to use the holistic scoring method may institute it as a regular part of their teaching. Because they can avoid many hours of correcting papers if they get together to use this process, many teachers are encouraged to give more writing assignments in their classrooms.

Disadvantages

1. The initial training session and scoring session may be more time-consuming than other scoring methods.
2. There is no separation between form and content, which prevents the analysis of component parts even when this is desirable.
3. It may be difficult to coordinate the schedules of many teachers or to arrange release time for the scoring session.

---

*Adapted from Manual for Scoring the Writing Sample, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J.

Analytical Scoring*

Analytical scoring can focus on a particular component and determine whether remediation is required.

Advantages

1. Precise scoring criteria are provided, which makes it easy to decide if a response is correct.
2. It is easy to identify the particular components of writing that students need to work on.
3. Papers need be read only once.
4. For some of the skills, papers can be read by people who are not experts in writing skills or teaching.

Disadvantages

1. A standard set of scoring criteria may be seen as restrictive.
2. Measuring discrete components of writing oversimplifies the act of writing in a way that limits the assessment of a student's true writing skills.
3. Analytical scoring may be time-consuming because of the necessity for a precise checking of details.
4. Scoring is done in isolation, so that usually no new insights about writing are gained from the process.
5. Emphasis is placed on incorrect responses as flaws in the writing rather than on strength in writing.

---

*Adapted from Manual for Scoring the Writing Sample, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J.

T-Unit Writing Level Formula

Primarily a research tool, the T-Unit Writing Level Formula is an experimental objective measure. T-Unit length is closely tied to writing maturity and may form a basis for measuring long-term improvement. Researchers claim that the average student in the 12th grade writes T-Units nearly 60% longer than those the average student writes in fourth grade.*

A T-Unit, a terminal or thought unit, consists of one main clause possibly expanded at any of many different points by modifiers or complements. A simple sentence of two words is one T-Unit. A complex sentence with a number of subordinate clauses and modifying phrases is also one T-Unit. However, a compound sentence will be two or more T-Units depending on the number of coordinate clauses.

1. In Class
   - A. Assign a composition and allow approximately 30 minutes for writing and proofreading.
   - B. As each student finishes writing, ask the students to count and record on the paper the exact number of words in the composition.
2. After the papers are collected
   - A. Mark off the T-Units in each student's writing, and count them.
   - B. Divide the total number of words by the number of T-Units to derive the average T-Unit length.

$$\frac{\text{Number of Words}}{\text{Number of T-Units}} = \text{T-Unit length}$$

Neither misspelling nor faulty usage or absence of punctuation is to be considered. Place slash marks dividing the piece of writing into units of one main clause with all its subordinate clauses attached to it. Decide whether an expression goes with the preceding main clause attached to it, or with the one following, so that no fragment is created or permitted to stand.

An and or but between two main clauses always goes with the second clause.

Sample of Student Writing**

(Spelling has been corrected.)

I like the movie we saw about Moby Dick the white whale/ the captain said if you can kill the white whale Moby Dick I will give this gold to the one that can do it/ and it is worth sixteen dollars/they tried and tried/but while they were trying they killed a whale and used the oil for the lamps/they almost caught the white whale/

Words	68
T-Units	6
T-Unit Length	11.33

---

*Some of the limitations of this measure are evidenced by the number of T-Units written by author Ernest Hemingway.

**Kellogg W. Hunt, Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels.

CLASS ROSTER FOR RECORDING T-UNIT LENGTHS

School: ______________________ Teacher: ______________________

Class: ______________________ Date of Test: ______________________

No. of Students: ______________

Student's Name	Reading Score	No.of Words	÷ No.of Units	= T-Unit Length
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				
16.				
17.				
18.				
19.				
20.				
21.				
22.				
23.				
24.				

STUDENT DATA REPORT FORM

District ____________________ School ________________________ Grade _____ Teacher __________________

CHECK ONE: Control Group ☐ Treatment Group ☐ Dates of Course (if taken) __________ to __________

DIRECTIONS: Please use separate sheets for treatment and control group classes. If a student ID code is used, please save your coding list so that you can give students the same ID code during their posttest. RAW SCORES SHOULD BE PROVIDED.

	Test #1 Name ____________ Form/Level ____________ Date of Pretest ____________ Date of Posttest		Test #2 Name ____________ Form/Level ____________ Date of Pretest ____________ Date of Posttest		Test #3 Name ____________ Form/Level ____________ Date of Pretest ____________ Date of Posttest	
Name or ID #	Pretest Score	Posttest Score	Pretest Score	Posttest Score	Pretest Score	Posttest Score
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						
11.						
12.						
13.						
14.						
15.						
16.						
17.						
18.						
19.						
20.						

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